

Chapter 1

Hi! So this is my first fanfic on - but it's the 11th fanfic I've written so far.

In this story, Hermione is a bit...one might say...out of character. However, I have always assumed that Hermione is hiding a rather hyper counterpart, which she does so in order to maintain her reputation (I know I certainly do).

I'd also like to add that the issues Hermione is going through with Ginny (the "You need a boyfriend to be less neurotic" issue, that is) is actually based off my own life - just a note. LOL.

Disclaimer: At no point in my life did I or will I ever own Harry Potter or the characters. That is all from the magic hand of JK Rowling. So, hold your attorneys and set them on someone else. Smiles broadly. I hope you enjoy it!

September 19th

So, today is September 19th, as you obviously should have concluded from the date of this entry. If not...well that's nothing short of pathetic, isn't it? Honestly! Some people just never seem to get down the simple skill of deduction. Idiots. If everyone just stopped for one second and

Okay. I'm going to stop writing about that topic, as I really don't wish to bore you with a five-page rant...okay, so I wouldn't care. In actuality, Harry is staring over me and is reminding me *why* I was given this diary. To which I say: Go find your own diary to look in, Potter! Er, sorry...

Right. So, to answer dear Harry's question:

I received this diary because I, Hermione Granger, turned 17 today. Hums happy birthday to herself. *Oui. C'est la vie.* I'm finally of age, and in my final year of Hogwarts. Which, I will admit, is a bit depressing. Oh well...I'll just get back to the topic of my birthday.

So, I woke up this morning and decided that I would not, as I normally do on a Saturday, wear my uniform (yes, I will admit it, I can be odd sometimes). Instead I decided on a pair of blue jeans that have been hiding at the bottom of my trunk and this sweet short sleeved blue shirt I have that has a V-neck (nothing inappropriate – who do you think I am? Lavender?). That didn't stop Ron, Ginny, and Harry from staring at me as I walked into the common room Harry and I share as Heads, which we, of course, let our friends come into.

So, being myself, I glared at them and demanded what was up, to which Ron began stuttering and then blushed and looked away, and Harry simply remained silent and continued staring.

Ginny, however, being the obnoxious (yet loveable) person she is who is unembarrassed by any situation, replied, "We had no idea you actually had a figure, Hermione."

To which I responded that she was an absolute prat and that Ron and Harry were being gits. But everything worked out okay, because then they insisted on giving me presents (to save their skin, I believe).

Yes! Presents! The presents I received, because Harry and Ron *finally* remembered that I have a birthday! You'd *think* they'd remember the other six years...or even ask why I hadn't celebrated a birthday...but *no*. I had to write them a letter pretending to be an anonymous source. Sometimes it's helpful that those two boys are incredibly naïve.

Anyway, back to my presents.

From my parents, I received the most gorgeous necklace imaginable. It's a golden chain, and hanging from it is a sapphire shaped like a drop of water. And, as if that wasn't enough, they sent me a matching pair of earrings. Yes, one wouldn't expect Miss Hermione Granger to get excited about that – but I'm a girl, too, all right? So, really, Lavender can quit pestering me to give them to her.

Ginny gave me a book entitled, "So You Can't Get a Boyfriend - Five simple and easy ways to snag the guy of your dreams!" Thanks, Gin – incredibly subtle. Apparently Ginny's under the impression that if I had a boyfriend I wouldn't be a neurotic freak who cried at the idea of

an E. Well, I'm sorry if my education happens to be important to me. Boyfriend. Honestly. I don't need a boyfriend! I mean, who needs a boyfriend when I have...er...Dobby! Okay, no, that didn't sound right. Not right at all... I'll come back to this later...

Mrs. Weasley sent me a home baked pecan pie and this gorgeous sweater she made. It's this bottle green color that goes splendidly with my hazel eyes, and Harry's, actually. Unfortunately, I don't think he could fit into my sweater, not that he doesn't want to. Poor bloke. I saw him staring greedily at my sweater...or maybe it was a dull bored stare, but honestly, the two expressions are like two peas in a pod. Truly, they are.

Mr. Weasley, who never usually sends me presents, gave me a collection of outlets. Apparently he believes one can never be without too many outlets. I couldn't bear telling him that I had enough outlets in my house. It's the thought that counts, after all.

Fred and George were kind enough to send me a bottle of hair straightener from their shop – a bottle that I will not be touching and will soon tragically find itself at the depths of the lake. Really, like I'm going to let them turn my hair into...into a raccoon or something.

Parvati and Lavender both didn't get me anything, though I have a nagging suspicion that they teamed up with Ginny on the book thing. They're on my case about having a relationship with a guy as well. They're insane, I tell you, insane! I don't need a boyfriend! I'm the most unstressed person in existence!

...

Anyway, back to the subject of gifts and me. Because this is the one day where everything is about me. Or, you know, five minutes of it is about me.

Luna got me a subscription to *The Quibbler*. Not sure what I'll do with the magazines...probably use them when I need a good laugh. Or something to rant about. Did I mention how much I like to rant? My favorite ranting topic is house-elves, but I'll save that for later.

Ron, the idiot he is, got me perfume again. I haven't the heart to tell him that I despise perfume, and usually end up giving it to Lavender or Parvati as a Christmas gift. Which is truly awful of me, I know, but then at least *somebody* is putting it to good use. And Ron's feelings aren't hurt.

To go on a tangent, Ron has a very small understand of the female species. He assumes that all girls love perfume and make up... Sighs Oh, Ron... Of course, it's absolutely obvious that he has a thing for me. I'm not trying to sound conceited, it's just *really* painfully obvious. I still haven't figured out how I'm going to tell him he's like my brother. I think I shall put that on my To-Do List, which currently consists of:

1. Free the houses-elves
2. Convince Neville that the heliopaths Luna told him about in fifth year do *not* exist, and that it is indeed safe to go in for a career at the ministry if he chooses
3. Convince Ginny, Lavender, and Parvati that I do *not* need a boyfriend
4. While I'm at it, convince the three mentioned above that I am not neurotic.
5. Convince Harry that sneaking into my room and creeping into my bathroom while I'm in the shower is not a good idea of a joke, is an abuse of his power as Head Boy and having a room next to mine, and an absolutely perverted thing for him to do, especially as my best friend

And now, of course, I have 6. Break Ron's heart without actually breaking it.

Goodness, I have a lot to do...but more on that anon.

Oh! Malfoy got me a gift as well! It was a sweet little letter, which I will pen in here for you.

Dear Mudblood,

Who would ever imagine that you would live to be 17? Hopefully you'll be the next mudblood to be murdered – it's a shame that it didn't work out in second year. Would've saved us all a lot of trouble. And our eyes, as well.

Wasn't that the sweetest thing you ever read? I think it's my favorite gift. I'll treasure it forever. That or burn it. Yes, I think I'll go with the latter.

Now, for the final present, which, of course, was from Harry. Being the dear he is, he gave me...this diary. With this message inscribed on the front page:

Dear Hermione,

We all know that you're verystudious neurotic (the neurotic seems to be in Ginny's penmanship - apparently she snuck in and crossed out the studious and replaced it with that horrible word. I will be having a word with that Weasley girl)and take everything extremely seriously. However, I know on the inside you're probably bursting to be...well, I don't know. Something else. You're someone who I imagine keeps a lot in you, and probably dying to curse as well. So, I present you with this diary, so that you can write everything you really feel, and so that I can sneak looks and know what really goes on in that head of yours.

Your dearest friend,

Harry

Thank you, Harry, dear. That's exactly what I need to hear...or rather read: that I need a diary to remain sane. How sweet. And no, you cannot look at what I write in this.

Did you not read what I just said? Stop looking in here, Damnit! No, you were not right. Quit snickering. I didn't curse because I was dying to do so. I did it because you're being a complete prat.

There. That's better.

Truth be told, the diary is gorgeous. It's hand bound and has lightly colored blue parchment. It must have cost him a great deal. I really

am grateful for it, and it's one of the few gifts that showed he actually knew me, because whether or not I'll admit it, I need an outlet.

Honestly, what with penting up all my craziness, etc., for school, I need somewhere to be the...me that's bursting to come out, as Harry so eloquently worded it.

Now, I'm going to close this diary and put it somewhere where Harry will never find it, because he's getting very nosy lately. Have no idea why. Must ask Ron. Or Ginny. Ginny seems to have a strong understanding of why males do what they do. Yes, definitely will ask Ginny.

For now, I must go on patrol with Harry before we go to breakfast...I'll probably take the time to lecture him on privacy and explain how from now on I will be putting an extremely strong lock on my bathroom, so he can quit trying to break in. The pervert, honestly.

I wish I knew what has gotten into him.

And if I find one more couple making out in the library (how dare they abuse the books!) or fondling one another in a niche somewhere...I swear I will be permanently scarred for life.

September 19 – Later today

Okay, just finished breakfast. So, now I'm relaxing, as it's Saturday and I've already done all of my homework for the next week. Poor Harry and Ron are racing to finish their homework for advanced Potions. Snape will have their skin, he will, I swear it. And I will not help them this time, because they are insufferable gits who never do their work.

Okay, so I'll give them two hours before I pity them. They're lucky that troll came along in first year.

So, I had a nice conversation with dear Harry during patrols, which I will record in here.

Me: Okay, Harry. I need to have a word with you... Hey! You! Yes *you* . Didn't anyone tell you that making out in the hallways is strictly for- get your hand out from under her shirt this instant!

Harry: You couldn't have gone a little lighter on them, could you?

Me: Harry, they were basically having sex in the hallway. I don't know about you, but I certainly didn't want to witness that!

Harry: There's nothing wrong with watching a couple having a healthy shag, Hermione. You can learn a lot.

Me: You're an absolute pervert, you know that?

Harry: And that's why you love me. *Harry flutters his eyelashes innocently as I glare at him.*

Me: Speaking of which, let's get back to what I needed to talk to you about.

Harry: Which was?

Me: Quit trying to sneak into my bloody bathroom while I'm taking my shower!

Harry: But it's so much fun to hear you scream as you hear the door unlock and to slowly open the door to find you red with rage with a towel hastily wrapped around you.

Me: Fun? *Fun?* Harry James Potter!

Harry: Oh, don't full name me, Miss Hermione Jane Granger.

Me: Cute, Harry, very cute. But I'm not sure if you're aware of this – in society, it's usually frowned upon to see someone of the opposite sex naked unless you're married.

Harry: Married? *Laughs.* You're such a prude, Hermione!

Me: I'm prudish for not wanting you to see me *naked?*

Harry: Okay, well, no...

Me: Ha. I'm right. As always.

Harry: You are not always right!

Me: I am, too.

Harry: Are not.

Me: *Raises an eyebrow* . I bet you your Firebolt that Lavender Brown is in the library behind a stack of books making out with her present boytoy.

Harry: Does it have to be my Firebolt? How about...a stick. From outside. That I pick up randomly from the ground. And add pieces of grass to at the end.

Me: Ha. You know I'm right.

Harry: Okay, so you're right. I admit it. Can I sneak into your bathroom now without you blowing a gasket? *Smiles evilly* .

Me: Harry Potter, you are insane.

Harry: Indeed, but so are you.

And that ends the conversation. It was so much fun. I should have more of these weird conversations with Harry.

Damn. I forget to ask Ginny why Harry is acting like this. Must remember to do so tomorrow.

And I also want to lead a revolt among the house elves...but they seem to be very stubborn. Honestly. Why can't they just realize that they *want* freedom?

Chapter 2

September 25

Class is about to start. Just wanted to say something before I slip this into my bag. My word: I still know you exist, I swear. I'm incredibly sorry that I didn't write earlier! Of course, now I feel completely insane, apologizing to an inanimate object...oh well. Insanity seems to be "in" this year. Back on topic: I've just been incredibly busy. *Apparently* some fifth years found it entertaining to flood the second story bathrooms, so Harry and I have been forced to patrol there for the past few days in order to prevent such an event from occurring again. The rest of my free time has been spent, of course, helping Ron and Harry with their homework and finishing my work that is due next week.

Oh! Herbology's starting.

September 25 – Herbology

Are you sure using Hermione's diary is a good idea?

Hush, Harry. We ran out of paper. How else are we supposed to entertain ourselves when all we're doing today is taking notes? Anyway, it's not as if we're going to actually look at her entries. Not that you haven't tried.

Ha ha. Much appreciated.

Yeah, question about that, mate. What is your new obsession with reading her diary?

It *would* be new, as she's never had a diary before, wouldn't it?

You know what I mean, you prat.

I just want to know what goes on behind closed doors.

Bathroom doors, you mean?

Hey! Who told you about that?

Lavender said that she heard Hermione raving after you tried to break in on her while showering for...what was it? The third time? Really, what's going on?

It's just a joke. You wouldn't believe how hilarious it is to hear Hermione scream. Anyway, it's not as if I've ever seen anything.

Pity.

Now who's the sick one?

You know I'm only joking.

Do I?

Nice. Very nice.

No problem. So...Hey! Who said you could take the

Hush up. I need to say something. I th- Wait one second. Hermione isn't taking thorough enough notes, it seems. I must remind her. We don't want to fail NEWTs.

That was priceless

It was notpriceless, Harry! I think my bloody nose is broken!

And you deserve it. Prodding her and asking her why she hasn't filled up four feet of parchment? You're lucky she happens to be in a good mood today and only swatted you on the nose. I reckon if she wasn't she would've taken her quill and stabbed your eyes until you were blind.

Yeah, well, my nose still hurts.

Wimp.

Hey! You have no idea how much this

September 25 – After Herbology, in the library

Harry and Ron are dead. Absolutely dead. How *dare* they take my diary out of my bag while I'm taking notes because they're bored! Out of paper. Ha! What type of an excuse is that? I am going to bloody kill them!

They are definitely not reading my Herbology notes from hear on out. They can fail for all I care.

So, we both know that I will end up giving it to them, but what can I say? I can't stand seeing a failing grade. It hurts my eyes, even when the grades aren't mine, which is, of course, always the case.

But I'm going to put a security spell on this thing. I can't believe I didn't think of it before. I must be going insane.

So, Professor Sprout is a bit mad at me, considering that when I looked sideways to find out what Ron and Harry were doing instead of taking notes this time, I saw that they were writing in my diary, so I snatched it from them and began yelling at them, calling them irresponsible gits – you know, what I normally do whenever they're being prats.

So, after class I simply told Sprout that I had an emotional breakdown. Which, surprisingly, went down very well with her. Apparently the teachers have been wondering for a while now when I'd crack. How comforting.

Oh! There's Ginny! I must talk to her, as I haven't seen her around lately. I have a sneaking suspicion that she's found another boyfriend, as her absences in the past have always been excused by snogging.

September 25 – After my talk with Ginny

Ginny Weasley is insane. Absolutely insane. She knows nothing about guys. *Nothing!* Now what am I going to do? I can't ask Ron, as he's more clueless than she is! I can't ask my parents, as they would most likely freak. I can just imagine my father charging over to Hogwarts with a bat and beating Harry with it over the head.

I might as well tell you what happened.

So, I caught Ginny and asked her if we could talk. Ginny shrugged a yes, and we trudged through the Gryffindor common room and to the stairs that led to the Head's common room, and then went to my room. After seating ourselves comfortably on my bed, I told her about Harry's recent obsession with reading my diary and with trying to sneak into the bathroom as I showered. Ginny's mouth twitched a bit until she began laughing.

"What?" I asked her, completely confused. "What do you find so funny?"

"You are completely hopeless when it comes to guys," Ginny confided to me.

"Thanks, Gin," I told her sarcastically. "Care to be more specific?"

"He obviously has a thing for you."

"What?" I exploded. "Are you...are you *insane* Ginerva?"

"Don't use my real name," Ginny said, frowning. "There's a reason I ask people to call me Ginny, you know."

"Fine," I said quickly. "Just answer my question."

"No, I'm not insane, Hermione," Ginny replied, giving a little sniff at the very idea. "Really, I know how guys think. He likes you."

"But he's my best friend!" I blanched. "What makes you think he likes me like...like that?"

Ginny gave an impatient sigh. "Why else would he try to sneak in on you while you're in the shower... *naked*?"

"Because he thinks it's a joke!" I told her. "He's under the impression that it's some game."

"A game?" Ginny chuckled. "Hermione, let me explain something to you. Now, I'm sure you know about a little thing called hormones..."

"Don't talk to me as if I'm 10-years-old, Ginny," I snapped at her. "You don't need to explain it."

"Right," Ginny said with a smile. "Well, with hormones usually comes another little thing we like to call lust."

"What's your point?" I asked, tapping my foot against my bed.

"Slow today, aren't you?" I gave Ginny a menacing glare, but she didn't seem to care. My glares don't usually work on Ginny, which is very important. Must remember to add "Find a way to make Ginny cave via one of my expressions" to my To-Do List. "Hermione, Harry is a male. Harry is a 17-year-old male. Harry is a 17-year-old male with raging hormones who has a crush on you. Therefore, Harry wants to see you naked. Understand?"

"He hasn't seen me naked, though!" I cried out, flinging my hands. "He always opens the door slowly enough so that I can hop out of the shower and put a towel on!"

"You still don't think he finds that attractive?" Ginny asked me, raising an eyebrow and staring at me as if I was the most naïve human being to ever walk on this planet. "C'mon, Hermione! You've just come out of the shower! Don't be stupid."

"But he's *laughing* each time," I cried desperately. "He's not looking at me! He's just laughing at my expression!"

"Sure." Ginny rolled her eyes. "Let me make this clearer for you: why do you think he got you a diary?"

"So that I wouldn't go insane," I responded promptly.

"No. He got it for you so that he could look in it. Why does he want to look in it?"

"Because he knows it annoys the hell out of me."

"My Merlin, Hermione!" Ginny cried out in an exasperated tone. "You are unbelievable! He wants to look in it because he's hoping that you'll write how you feel about him!"

"You know what?" I said, standing up. "You are absolutely, positively, one hundred percent, out of your mind!"

"Fine," Ginny sighed, shaking her head and getting up as well. "I don't now why you asked me if you won't take my word for it."

"Because I expected you to have some sanity left in you!" I informed her.

Ginny gave a short laugh. "I believe you're the one without sanity, Hermione, dear. Now, I must go to the library. I have someone I need to...meet up with." Ginny waggled her eyebrows at me and left my room, leaving me completely confused and wondering what the hell was the matter with her.

And so, that's what happened. And that's why I no longer have any one to talk to. Which is a pity, as I'm most likely going to end up obsessing over this Harry thing. Luckily, I'm not doing so right now. I have to go visit the kitchens and talk to the house-elves. Hopefully they won't threaten to spear me this time when I suggest the idea of wages.

October 1

Damn you Ginny Weasley. Damn you to Hell.

I am officially obsessing over this Harry thing. Wait, what Harry thing? There *is*no Harry thing. It's just a figment of m- Ginny's imagination. Ginny. It's all Ginny's doing – Ginny and her inability to understand guys.

Oh, how she's thrown me off track! I patrolled with Harry today, as always, and I just felt...awkward around him. I've known him for six years, and never has it been so terribly awkward. Even when we had our spat in third year over the Firebolt. *Never*.

So, we were patrolling around the astronomy tower (we finally were able to convince McGonagall to let us place prefects on the second story), as that's where all of the most "heinous" acts seem to occur – idiot hormonal students who think they can get away with shagging in the astronomy tower. Honestly.

So, after I yelled at a couple that, thankfully, still had their clothes on and sent them to their dormitories, Harry and I continued our patrol in silence. Harry stared out at the stars as I gave him quick glances. I have no idea why – I just felt compelled to do so. Well, he finally turned to look at me and I quickly whipped my head about so that I was staring determinedly in front of me.

“Why were you staring at me?” Harry questioned me.

“I was *not* staring at you, you twit,” I said, making sure to avoid eye contact.

“You were, too.”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” I replied lightly, still not looking at him.

“Then why aren’t you looking at me?” he interrogated me, and then, to prove his point, he stepped in front of me so that he was blocking my way. Luckily, I had a ready excuse.

“I wanted to look at the stars,” I retorted. “Is that a crime? Now move over, you’re in the way.”

Harry gave a laugh. “You were *not* looking at the night sky.”

“I was, too!” I replied, insulted by his lack of trust, yet impressed by his ability to grasp what goes on in my mind. To prove my point, I walked over to the balcony of the tower, placed my elbows on the railing and my head in my hands, and stared glossy eyed at the stars. Harry joined me, mimicking my actions.

“What do you see, Hermione?” he asked, a smile on his lips. He moved a bit closer to me and for reasons unbeknownst to me, I felt a shiver run up my spine. A wind must have swept by...even though my hair stayed put...and in romance books whenever a guy you like moves close to you, you get-

Never mind. Not going there. Because I do not feel like that about Harry at all. Not even close.

However, I did end up taking a deep breath before I answered.

"I see the stars," I replied, with a roll of my eyes. "What do you think I'd see? Madam Maxime isn't planning a visit anytime soon."

"Is it only the stars that you can see?" he asked me. "Nothing else?"

I continued to look at the stars, now officially mystified. "Why would I need to see anything else?" came my reply. "They're gorgeous. I don't need anything else to look at."

"That's very true." I turned to look at Harry to find him staring at me. I gave a nervous little laugh.

"H-hello there," I said with an anxious smile, taking a little side step away from him in as discreet a manner as I could manage.

Harry chuckled and moved closer once more. "What's got you all tense?"

"I..." I racked my brain for a motive to give him. Just as it looked like Harry was going to repeat his question, I replied in a rushed voice, "It's just a bit dark and cold out, that's all." That apparently, did not seem to be the proper answer, as Harry raised an eyebrow at me.

"Hermione, if you're going to lie, at least come up with a believable one."

"What are you talking about?" I demanded, crossing my arms and glaring.

"I know you," Harry said resolutely. "The day you're scared of the dark is the day I decide to kiss Malfoy."

"Oh my God!" I screamed, covering my ears. "Bad images! Horrible, disgusting, life scarring images!"

"Oh, hush," Harry said genially. "Anyway, what's really up?"

"It's none of your business if you don't believe my excuse," I replied stubbornly.

“Did anyone ever tell you that you’re too damn obstinate for your own good?” Harry asked me lightly while turning around so his back was leaning on the railing.

“Yes,” I replied. “Everybody who has ever spoken with me.”

“Just making sure,” Harry said with a laugh.

It was then that I realized we hadn’t been patrolling for 25 minutes, and rushed Harry away from the balcony so that we could complete our duties.

Now, here’s proof that Harry does *not* have a thing for me! He could have easily told me his feelings in that wonderfully romantic atmosphere, or at least have taken hold of my hand, that git...not that I wanted him to.

But maybe he felt embarrassed...or shy...or...I don’t know. Maybe he really *did* want to say that he loved me more than anything in the world and-

Okay. Stopping there. He did not want to do *any* of that because he does not love me. He has no feelings for me whatsoever other than those of friendship. And I have no feelings other than friendship for him.

I’m certain of it.

I’m pretty sure.

I’m most likely positive.

There’s a 50 percent change that I’m convinced.

I might not like him like that.

Well, it’s possible that I do have feelings for-

Oh my God. Ginny Weasley is so incredibly dead.

October 4

Still hate Ginny, who can jump off the astronomy tower for all I care.

Okay, actually, no, that would be quite sad, as she's my only close friend who happens to be female. Honestly. Guys can go around thrusting swords into dragons and watch in delight as people get blown up, but mention your Period and suddenly their faces get all blanchy and they realize that they've forgotten something upstairs and race off to their dormitory.

Males.

So, I'm continuing to obsess over this Harry thing. Okay, Hermione. How many times must your logical self remind you? There is no Harry thing whatsoever! It's this Harry...this Harry...predicament. There ya go. Much better. A predicament brought upon by Ginny.

However, Harry has been acting really weird lately. Take, for example, today at breakfast. We sat down as we normally did, with Harry and Ron seated across from me. I was reading an interesting article in *The Daily Prophet* when all of a sudden an arm pushed the paper down. I looked up to discover that it was Harry's arm.

"Harry, what are you—" I began, but before I could finish, Harry had pushed a biscuit into my open mouth. I sat there, dumbfounded, as the biscuit remained lodged between my lips. Meanwhile, Harry was grinning at me broadly and Ron was staring at both of us as if we had gone mental.

Finally, I was able to eat the biscuit (how I did so without choking is still a mystery to me), and I turned to Harry with what I can only assume, as there was no mirror, was a mystified look.

"What was that about?" I asked him, placing my now ripped paper down next to my plate.

"Nothing," Harry replied, with an innocence he simply could not pull off. And then he proceeded to take a strawberry from a bowl and place it into my gaping mouth. I plucked the strawberry out and stared at him in disbelief. Meanwhile, Ron was chuckling.

"Did you guys become a couple overnight or something?" he asked, staring at the two of us. When neither one of us answered his face paled and he asked, as if life was coming to an end, "You didn't, right?"

"Of course not!" I replied immediately, still eyeing the broadly grinning Harry. "What is going on, Harry?"

"You have to have fun sometimes," he said with a slight shrug, plopping a strawberry into his own mouth.

"Harry James Potter, you just fed me my breakfast!" I said in a low voice. "Why on earth were you doing that?" From a little ways off, I heard Ginny cough loudly. I turned to look at her and her eyes clearly said, "I told you so." But, I had no idea why she was doing it. Harry hadn't done anything to signify that he had any feelings for me - only something extremely odd.

"You're no fun," Harry replied.

"I do not find fun," I retorted, "choking on fruit that's put unexpectedly into my mouth, Mr. Potter." Harry simply grinned at me. Apparently he was finding this amusing. I shook my head and returned to my now unreadable newspaper, while wondering why Harry was acting so odd.

Chapter 3

This chapter is dedicated to the awesome Terese, who gave me wonderful ideas to this story. I'd be nothing without her. You rock!

October 10

Harry is continuing to be weird. I have no idea what's gotten into him. He did the whole put food into my open mouth again last night – except instead of strawberries it was a pastry. He just sat there with that cheeky little grin of his while Ginny did that annoying cough thing she does. I have no idea why. She must be going mental. Harry as well. There's no other explanation for it.

So, I'm in the library, as the rest of Gryffindor is partying because...well, because they want to. The noise reaches even my room, and the library seemed the best bet for doing all my homework, which I'm almost done with by the way, and-

Oh my God! I just looked up, and there was Harry, sitting across from me, staring at me! I almost had a heart attack.

"Bloody Hell, Harry!" I just exclaimed, surprising even myself by how much I sounded like Ron. "What are you doing here? Or rather, simply, what are you doing?" For Harry was still staring at me intently.

However, he is still yet to respond. I'm waving my hand in front of his face, and he continues to stare at me. I just scooted over a little to the left, but his deep green eyes followed me. So, I think I'll just continue with my work...or rather writing in you. Yes, that works.

Okay, I just looked up again, and he's still staring at me. Just ignore it, Hermione. Ignore it.

But I can't! He's *still* doing it! Damnit. How am I supposed to concentrate with those sexy green- I mean when his eyes are following me?

Argh. This is so annoying. Viktor Krum did this while we were dating as well. Except, it made sense then, as we were going out. I don't understand why Harry's doing this, as he has no feelings like that for me whatsoever, no matter what Ginny believes.

I will not look up. I will not look up. I will not look up. I will not look up.

Okay, so I looked up. But can I help it if I'm so paranoid? And, honestly, he's still doing it! I think I'm going to close this journal and head up to bed. I've finished most of my work for next week, anyway.

October 10 – in my room

I don't believe him. So, I leave the library and head to Gryffindor tower, and he gets up and follows me like a puppy! This is *insanity*, I tell you, pure insanity!

The world is surely coming to an end. There's simply no other explanation for it.

October 11

This is just getting ridiculous. Harry has gone too far.

So, I bade Harry and Ron goodbye after lunch – they were having one of their many breaks and I was off to Ancient Runes. However, I was held back because there apparently was another incident on the second floor. McGonagall rushed me there, as I was the first Head she could find, where I was ordered to keep people away for a few minutes while she and some other teachers sorted out whatever was going on - another prank, I assume. Once everything was cleared up, I was allowed to go to class. However, being late, I was forced to sit in my least favorite place – the back.

As I began to take notes, I heard a rustling behind me. I turned around, and no one was there. Then I felt a tap on my left shoulder. I looked to my left at the student sitting next to me, but they weren't looking at me – all of their attention was ahead. I stifled a frown as I continued jotting down what the Professor was saying.

It wasn't long, however, when someone tapped me on the left shoulder again. My head literally snapped to the side, to find the student next to me still oblivious to the fact that I even existed. I frowned for a moment, and then it hit me. There was no other explanation.

"Harry!" I whispered to thin air. I heard a rustling sound once more, and then a soft response of, "Yes?"

"Why you!" I whispered angrily in the direction I had heard him, but soft enough so that those surrounding me wouldn't suspect me of not paying attention. "What are you doing here?"

"I was bored," invisible Harry said, and I could just imagine him shrugging. "Thought it would be fun to come here."

"And distract me?" I demanded. "I need to pass the NEWTs Harry, and I can't do that if you're here poking at me!"

"The NEWTs are in eight months, Hermione," Harry said with an exasperated sigh. "Anyway, you could *not* take notes and still pass. Heck, you could not go to any of your classes and still get high enough grades to get all your NEWTs."

"I don't want to simply pass," I hissed at him, "I want to get as many Os as possible. And NEWTs may be in eight months, but this information will still be on the test! Now get back to the common room. Help Ron with whatever teenage crises he's going through – I'm sure there must be something horrid he's going through."

"You're no fun," Harry said, and once again I imagined what he looked like - most likely pouting.

"I'll have fun," I said through clenched teeth, "once class is over. Now get out!" I heard a rustling noise for a last time, which I followed to the door. He was finally gone, and I returned my attention to the lesson.

My only question is why is he doing this? Oh, this is impossible! I can't handle this right now – that is to say, Harry and the way his insane mind works. I'm going to go take a shower. I need to relax. I need to breathe. I need my great smelling body oils that I left at home! That's what stops *me* from going insane. When will mum just send it over? I bet she's using them herself...sneaky little mother of mine.

Oh well. I guess a shower with no body oils afterwards will suffice. Hot water is better than nothing, after all. At least it will calm my nerves.

October 11

Dead. Harry Potter is so unbelievably bloody dead. Forget about Ginny. I'll deal with her later. All I know is that I will be coming after Harry James Potter with a pitchfork. He is the biggest prat that ever stepped foot on this earth! I am going to bloody kill him!

So, I'm taking my shower, and finally feeling relaxed. After finishing with my hair, I lathered soap into my hands and proceeded to wash my arms, when I heard a noise coming from the door. I just assumed it was Crookshanks clawing at it, as he so often does, and ignored it.

After all, what with my new lock on it, there was no way Harry could get in.

However, I heard a creaking sound, and I turned around abruptly, being the paranoid person I was...or rather am. I screamed when I saw that Harry was standing there. We stood there and stared at one another, and I could feel my heart pounding. It wasn't until his eyes, very briefly, moved their focus from my face to the rest of my body that I realized I was standing in front of him naked.

I reached for the towel that was hanging outside the shower as fast as humanly possible, even though I got it a bit wet. I hopped out of the shower. "We will talk about this somewhere other than my bathroom," I growled at him. And, raging with a sudden anger, I yelled at Harry, "Out! Get out! *Now!*" He did so immediately, and he looked horribly embarrassed.

Oh, but it gets worse; so horribly worse. I quickly put on my bra and a pair of knickers, and placed a thin robe on top, leaving it open. The rest of my clothes were in my room, and Harry would be insane to have stayed in there, I reassured myself.

But I had stupidly forgotten that dear Harry was insane. I walked into my room to find Harry sitting on my bed. When he caught sight of me, he quickly looked away.

Turning red once more, I closed the robe around me, holding them tight, my arm clenched around my waist. "What are you doing in here?" I demanded. "You were supposed to wait for me somewhere else!"

"I thought you meant here!" Harry retorted, rather annoyed, so I thought.

"But I'm in my underwear!" I cried out, containing the urge to throw up my arm in frustration, knowing that if I did so he'd see me in my lack of clothes once more.

"I honestly don't see what the big deal is," Harry said with a shrug.

"*Excuse me?*" I hissed at him.

"I've seen you in a bikini, Hermione," Harry reminded me. "The Burrow. This summer. Remember?"

"That was a bikini!" I exclaimed. "A bathing suit!"

"There's honestly no difference in the amount of skin the two cover," Harry replied stubbornly.

"That's not the point," I told him angrily. I quickly changed the topic to something else that I could rant about. "What were you doing in my bathroom, anyway?"

"I was just doing the game thing again!" Harry cried out, exasperated. "How was I supposed to know you weren't going to cover yourself up this time?"

"I told you not to come in again!" I yelled at him. Before he could respond I demanded, "How the hell did you get in? I put an unbreakable lock on that door!"

Harry just stared at me, and finally replied, "Hermione, I've learned things from Dumbledore that you've only read about in books. Believe me when I say an unbreakable lock is incredibly easy to break."

"You," I hissed, "our impossible, Harry James Potter!"

"I am not!" Harry replied, looking horribly offended.

"Why on earth do you keep on doing this Harry!" I cried out. "Is this some sort of fascination with you? Annoy Hermione Granger until she goes insane? First trying to sneak looks into my diary, then feeding me as if we were married, then poking at me during my lessons, and now being an absolute pervert, more so than you were before? Why are you doing this to me?"

"Why do you *think* I'm doing this?" Harry asked me, eyes ablaze. I was taken aback. How was I supposed to know what went through that mind of his?

"I don't know!" I cried out in frustration. "Is it a...a game to you, Harry? Do you find this funny?"

Harry shook his head in disbelief, and then left my room. I ran after him, despite my inappropriate attire.

“We are *not* finished!” I yelled after him. He continued walking and I followed him into the Gryffindor common room. As I entered I heard gasps of surprise at what I was wearing, and even some whistles from the seemingly immature males that occupied Gryffindor.

Then, a shout of, “Miss Granger!” registered in my brain, and I realized that McGonagall was here on one of her irregular visits of the tower. I simply ignored her.

“Well, is it?” I demanded of Harry.

“Is it what?” Harry asked me, turning around so that I could see just how pissed he was.

“Is this all some kind of game to you?” I asked him, approaching him furiously.

Harry looked as if he was fighting to say something, but finally he exploded, “Yes! This is all some kind of game to me. That’s all it is! All of it: trying to read your damn diary, popping food into your mouth at meals, staring at you in the library, sneaking in on you – that’s all it is, Hermione! That’s all it will ever be to you, isn’t it Hermione? Some bloody game!” And with that he stormed out through the portrait hole and I realized that I couldn’t follow him this time. Walking through Gryffindor tower in my underwear and robe was one thing, but walking through Hogwarts was completely different.

I stood there in shock, realizing Harry and I had just had a huge fight. I heard a sigh coming from Professor McGonagall, and I turned to look at her in surprise. She was staring at me, eyes glazed over as if she was remembering something.

“What?” I asked, not caring that I was being horribly rude.

“I never thought I’d see those two again,” McGonagall said with a smile. “I guess I was wrong.”

“What on earth are you talking about?” I asked incredulously.

"I'm talking about James and Lily Potter," McGonagall replied, clearly reminiscing. "I never thought I'd see a pair like them. How wrong I was." With that said, McGonagall left the tower as well, leaving me completely baffled.

Ginny, who had been sitting nearby, finally came up to me and dragged me to my room.

"I told you," she said, rather haughtily I thought, as she sat us down on my bed.

"Told me what?"

"That Harry has a thing for you!" Ginny cried out in disbelief at what she assumed was my ignorance.

I laughed at her. "Ginny, that argument proved nothing except that Harry finds annoying me some kind of game – just like I told you. He said so himself!"

"You honestly believed him?" Ginny asked me in incredulity.

"Of course," I said, staring at Ginny.

"You're telling me you didn't see the hidden message in his outburst of it will always be a game to you?"

"Hidden message?" I gawked at her. "Ginny..." I threaded my fingers through my damp locks in frustration. "Look, Ginny, you're the only one who thinks anything is going on."

"I am not!" Ginny cried out defensively. "McGonagall! McGonagall just said that you two reminded her of James and Lily!"

"Harry's parents hated each other before they got together," I retorted. "Harry and I are best friends. I would never want a relationship like that with Harry."

"I think she meant more than that argument, Hermione," Ginny replied with a raised eyebrow.

“Ginny, you are still completely insane.”

“Am I?” Ginny asked with a laugh. “Is it really that I’m insane, Hermione? Or rather, are you blaming insanity on others for your lack of belief in your heart? You’re letting logic overrun how you truly feel, Hermione, and you bloody well know it.”

“I am not!” I cried back, stung by her words.

Ginny simply shook her head and left, and I’m still alone now, lying on the bed, trying to figure out what on earth is going on.

There’s no way Ginny’s correct. Harry *cannot* have a thing for me. It defies logic...the universe...everything.

Our relationship is simply platonic. I’m absolutely sure of it.

At least, I think I am.

Chapter 4

October 12

You know that relationship I was talking about earlier? The one that I said was platonic? Well, now I'm certain it's not. 100 percent.

Because the relationship? Yeah, it doesn't exist.

He won't talk to me. Harry James Potter, who is my co-head and shares a private common room with me, whom I've known for seven years, refuses to speak with me. All because of that fight. And I don't understand *why*.

I have no one to confide in but you. No one. Harry's not speaking to me, so there goes my number one confidante. Ron...well, Ron is Ron. Need I say more? He's just not that sensitive at times. Or rather, empathetic. Yes, empathetic is the word. And he doesn't like to hear about my troubles. Most guys, actually, don't want to hear about the troubles a girl's going through. Harry's one of the few, or rather was, whom I could talk to about almost anything (there are still a few things that I have to save for Ginny, due to the male's inability to be able to handle discussing anything to do with the reproductive system).

Then there's Ginny. Yes, I can talk to Ginny about what I mentioned above, but on this Harry thing? No way. Ginny will just say, "He loves you." Now that helps me.

I don't need someone to tell me that Harry's in love with me, because if he were, he'd be speaking with me right now. What I need is someone to talk to – I love writing in here, I really do, but writing doesn't always help.

Oh joy. Patrols. This should be fun. I always love trying to convey to Harry what I want while he refuses to look at me.

October 12 – After Patrols

I hate this. I absolutely hate this. Not only is it irrational and ridiculous, but also it doesn't make sense. The last time Harry and I refused to

talk was in third year, and that was because I caused him to lose his Firebolt for a few days – but we made up immediately.

Our relationship is slowly becoming similar to the one, which exists between Ron and myself. I don't want that. I don't need another friend to bicker with constantly like a brother. I need a friend who I can joke with and rely on. Apparently that friend is gone.

He wouldn't even look at me. Not once through the entire three hours of patrolling. He wouldn't look at the stars with me as we went to the astronomy tower. He didn't even reprimand me for coming down hard on two fifth years snogging in a corridor.

It was as if I didn't exist. I might as well have been wearing his invisibility cloak for all he cared.

I don't know what to do. I want our old relationship back. I *need* that relationship back. I need Harry.

It's only been one day of silence, yet I miss him as if it's been ten years.

October 13

Still not talking to me. I've made up my mind that this is insane, therefore I *will* find a way to talk to him and sort this out. I will. I swear it.

In fact, I'll make sure this is done before I even start on my homework.

I'm not letting our friendship slip away.

October 13

So, Harry wasn't around, and I couldn't find him. I found I was growing slowly more and more desperate, and finally I raced over to the sixth year dormitory, grabbed Ginny, who looked extremely surprised and a bit miffed to be pulled out of the middle of a conversation, and dragged her to my room.

I explained everything that had happened between Harry and myself, and Ginny said, as I expected, "I told you he has a thing for you." Then she added something I didn't expect, "And, for that matter, so do you."

"I do not have a thing for Harry!" I exclaimed angrily to a smug Ginny.

"Right," she replied. "So tell me this. If you don't have a thing for Harry, then why is it that you, little miss bookworm, couldn't seem to concentrate on your book at all?"

"What are you talking about?" I asked Ginny, confused. I didn't remember this at all.

Ginny laughed. "Last week. When you were reading a book, while trying to keep an eye on the common room on McGonagall's request. Harry came into the room, and you looked up, never to return your eyes to your book again. For the past two years, you've read at the table in the Great Hall during meals, and Harry would come into the Hall. You'd follow him, almost as if you were in a trance, and then smile widely at him as if you didn't have a care in the world once he was seated. Admit it, Hermione: you're head over heels in love with him."

"I..." I couldn't find the words. I was in shock. My heart was beating so fast and my palms were sweaty. Me? In love with Harry? No, no way. Not possible. Not at all.

Finally, I managed to regain the ability to speak. "You're just trying to set me up with the first guy you see," I retorted.

"No, with the first guy who sees *you*, Hermione." Ginny stared at me, and my heartbeat increased even more.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked. "Guys see me. It's not as if I'm going around in an invisibility cloak, Gin." *Well, except for with Harry, apparently,* I thought to myself, *but that's different.*

"Don't be thick *again*," Ginny instructed me. "I'm talking about the guy who sees you for you, Hermione; who appreciates who you are; who realizes how special you are. I'm talking about the guy who would do

anything for you, and realizes that the sacrifice would be worth it. I'm talking about the guy who really sees who you are Hermione - who sees you as more than a...a neurotic brownnoser, with her head always in a book, who's the top of her class and obsessed with grades." A bit offended by her last sentence, I tried to interrupt, but she wouldn't let me. "The guy who loves your laugh, and loves to laugh with you; who loves to make *you* laugh and does just that. Who realizes the reason why you love books so much. Who knows that you want nothing more than to curl up on a couch on a snowy day with a book by the fire, scratching Crookshanks behind the ear. That guy is Harry, Hermione, and you bloody well know it." With that, Ginny stood up and left.

My head was spinning, my heart pumping blood like mad. I could feel my heartbeat in my head, and felt as if I wanted to faint. I still to right now.

Me? In love with Harry - my best friend Harry? No. Not me. There is no evidence of this whatsoever.

Well, there will be none once this bloody heart rate goes down and I wash the sweat off my hands.

Anyway, I'm sure I'm just stressed out, and that's why I'm reacting like this. I'll just talk to Harry, and everything will be fine again. It will be. I know it.

October14 – my room

I spoke with him. Finally. It took a while...but I was able to talk to him. And we're finally all right - friendship-wise that is. Here's exactly what happened:

After that exhilarating discussion with Ginny, I ran through our common room and over to his room. I tried to open the door to find that it was locked shut. Closing my eyes in aggravation, I began banging on his door and, as I had in fifth year when Harry locked himself up in Grimmauld Place, said, "Harry, I know you're in there."

There was still no response, so I hammered on the door once more and reiterated what I had said before, and then added, "Harry, we need to talk."

After what seemed like a century, I heard footsteps approach the other side of the door. Finally, with a creak, the door opened and let me see a very annoyed Harry.

For the first time in two days, he said something to me. True, it wasn't exactly in the most pleasant tone, but it was a start. "What do you want?" he growled.

"What do I want?" I stared at him. "What do I *want*? Are you joking? I want our bloody friendship back, Harry, that's what. Suddenly you can't even look at me anymore simply because we got in a tiny spat?"

I barged through the door, continuing my speech, while Harry just stared at me.

"Harry, this is insane. We're supposed to be best friends! Best friends don't separate simply over a frivolous argument such as the one we had. If I didn't know any better, I'd say that Ginny, and Parvati and the rest of the giggly girls club were right about their stupid theory!"

"Right about what?" Harry asked me, his face blank of any emotion.

I felt a breath catch in my throat. After taking a deep breath, I replied, keeping my eyes on his face, "That your feelings for me are more than platonic."

Harry's face still remained blank as he replied, "That is ridiculous Hermione. You know perfectly well that what we have is platonic. Don't let anybody try to make a relationship exist between us out of our friendship."

"So, we're still friends then?" I asked him cautiously, approaching him.

Harry sighed and turned around, running his fingers through his hair. Finally, he returned his gaze to me and replied, "Of course we are. I don't know what came over me," Harry said. "I'm sorry, Hermione. I really am."

"It's okay," I said softly. "I'm sorry for overreacting about the...about the shower thing." I blushed at the memory of it.

"Er, no," said Harry, a bit red himself. "That was totally my fault. I'll quit with these...with these games."

"Well, you don't have to quit all of them," I said, not realizing what I was saying. "Just ones that involve a R rating."

"Right," Harry said with a grin. Then he walked over to me and pulled me into a tight embrace, stunning me. True, we hugged many times before, but having been just in that fight and not talking for a couple of days, I was a bit surprised.

I hugged him back, and realized I thought for a second that I didn't want him to let me go. But I realized I had just been imagining things, as when he did, I felt no regret of no longer being in his arms – not that I didn't like it. Oh, I'm just confusing myself here.

So, I left, and returned to my room and finished up my homework, and now I'm here.

I'm absolutely thrilled now. I have my friend back, although we may still be on shaky grounds (I am crossing my fingers and hoping with all my heart that is not true), and I have evidence for Ginny that Harry does not like me. After all, he said our relationship was simply platonic and people were making something that didn't exist out of our relationship. I can't wait until I can rub that in her face.

Yet, at the same time, what he said feels like a knife has been plunged through my heart and twisted multiple times, and I just can't figure out why.

I know it's not love. It's certainly not love. At least, not anything other than platonic love. I mean, there's nothing wrong with a girl noticing that her best friend is nice looking – or, rather, drop dead gorgeous. And there's nothing unusual with following his fingers as he runs them through his thick and messy black hair, and wish for a few seconds that you were his fingers. And there's –

Oh. My. God.

They're right. They're all right. I can't believe this. Ginny's right. Parvati's right. Lavender's right. The Giggly Girls Club is right.

They're all *bloody right!*

For the first time in my life, I, Hermione Jane Granger, am wrong.

I am in love with him! I am in love with Harry!

Damnit. I seem to realize things at the wrong time, don't I? Great move, Granger, great move. Fall for him just after he says he views your relationship as strictly platonic. And my god, looking at his face, it was clear he thought just that.

Why does my life always seem to get messed up like this?

Okay. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst. I will not angst.

I will *not* think about how I feel knowing that we'll never be together. I will *not* think about how I'll feel when he gets a girlfriend, which he inevitably will. I will *not* think about how horrid I will feel the day of his wedding.

Nope, I won't think of any of that.

But, just in case, I think I'll run down to the kitchens and start a revolt, a petition, a strike – anything; anything to get my mind off Harry.

In case that doesn't work, I will fall back on Plan B, which involves blaming Ginny Weasley and setting her head on fire for introducing me to these feelings.

And, you know, killing every girl that comes within a 10-mile radius of Harry.

Chapter 5

The House elves were busy being forced to do slave labor, and kindly told me to leave them alone, as they wanted nothing to do with me. Well, except for Dobby. He smiled at me and gave me a hug, but then the other house elves glared at him...

I was *going* to stay, but then I realized that Plan A just wasn't worth it. The house elves, for the most part, have grown much more hostile towards me. I just don't understand *why*. All I want to do is help them fight the unfair conditions they work under.

So, as Plan A has now been thrown out the window, onward to plan B!

October 15

Amazingly enough, Ginny's head is still in perfect condition. However, my heart seems to be in exactly the opposite condition. I ended up, as I normally do with Ginny, pouring out my heart to her... Oh, as always, I'll just rewrite what happened in here.

Once again, I pulled Ginny from where she was holding court and dragged her back to my room, I shut the door, set a spell so that no one outside could hear us, then sat on my bed with Ginny.

"What's going on?" Ginny asked, a bit annoyed. "I was in the middle..."

"...of a conversation, I know, I know," I finished for her. "When are you not?" Ginny didn't say anything, but sat there expectantly, waiting for me to continue. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and then said, "I think...I think I have a thing for Harry!" I opened my eyes, expecting Ginny to look smug, enthralled, ecstatic, or any expression among those lines.

Instead, she appeared to be in shock. She gave a laugh, then held out a finger and said, "Let me get this straight...you have a thing for Harry?"

I nodded slowly for her benefit. "Just like you said. I just realized it yesterday. You were absolutely right!"

"Oh God," Ginny moaned, burying her face into her hands. "No, no, no..."

"Er, Gin?" I asked her, prying her fingers away from her forehead. "What's wrong?"

"Hermione," Ginny said, looking aggravated. "Don't tell me you didn't hear? Please tell me that you listen to gossip once in a while, so that my life can be so much easier?"

"Of course I don't listen to gossip!" I scoffed. "It's absolutely point—wait, hear what?" I asked cautiously, realizing that I was completely missing the point.

Ginny didn't say anything for a second, then she closed her eyes and said, "Harry has a girlfriend."

"W-what?" I sputtered. "A girlfriend...but he...he didn't have one yesterday."

"Yes, well, apparently, after your conversation with him, he went to the Gryffindor tower and asked out Parvati."

"He asked out Parvati?" I asked, feeling as if my entire body was going numb. "As in Parvati Patil? As in 'I constantly giggle and I love to wear pink and flirt outrageously with guys' Parvati?"

"That's the one," Ginny concurred.

"But..." I trailed off. "I mean, I know...that is to say..." I tried to produce a coherent sentence. "He said that his feelings for me were simply platonic, but somehow I thought..." I swallowed a lump that was forming at the back of my throat. I was Hermione Granger. I didn't cry over guys. I didn't let them ruin my life. I was stronger than that.

"There are two scenarios that are playing here," Ginny told me. "Either Harry's tricking you..."

"Believe me," I said with a bitter laugh. "His face was completely blank when he told me it was platonic, and Harry is horrible at hiding his feelings..." I thought back to fifth year and gave another laugh. Laughing seemed to suppress my tears, and as I was determined not to cry, I found myself in fits of laughter.

"What's so funny?" Ginny demanded.

"My life!" I exclaimed. "My life is what is funny, Ginny! I finally realize that I have feelings for him..." I stopped to burst into laughter once more, "...and he realizes that he's over me and wants, of all people, *Parvati!*"

Ginny stared at me through narrowed eyes. I might have been the brightest witch of my age, but Ginny was perceptive when it came to my feelings. She gave a little sigh, scooted over to me, and wrapped her arms around me, while I continued to laugh, scared that if I stopped, I'd begin sobbing.

"Then...then the other scenario is," Ginny said slowly, still holding me, "the other scenario is that he's over you, Hermione..."

"What am I supposed to do?" I asked, breathing slowly in and out so that I could get through a sentence without my ridiculous laughter.

"Move on," Ginny urged me, pulling away from our hug so that she could see me. "Get a boyfriend."

"I can't ask a guy out!" I exclaimed, wringing my hands. "I'm not that type of girl, Gin. That's you...I'm...I'm more...more old fashioned."

"Well, someone will ask you out," Ginny told me.

"No one has before..." I muttered

"Er, excuse me?" Ginny asked, putting her hands on her hips. "No one? Have you forgotten that the most wanted guy in Europe, the sports star, the best Seeker in the world? Viktor Krum?"

"Okay, so he asked me out!" I said impatiently. "But that's only because I wasn't some idiot he followed him around. No guy at Hogwarts will ever ask me out!"

"You'd be surprised," Ginny told me with a knowing look.

"I'm too *ugly* to be asked out, Gin."

"Ugly? Hermione, listen, you may not be drop dead gorgeous, like dear Fleur Delacour, but you *are* extremely pretty - crazy maybe; definitely neurotic. But pretty, all the same." Ginny paused a second to let the words sink in. "Look, there actually are many guys who would ask you out. They've just assumed that you and Harry were an item."

"Ha!" I cried. "Where did they get an idea like that?"

"Oh, come on, Hermione," Ginny rolled her eyes. "Everybody assumed it. You looked as if you were a couple – well, minus the kissing, of course. Anyway, that's not the point. The point is now that Harry has a girlfriend, the guys will realize that you're free."

"But maybe I don't *want* to be free," I moaned miserably. "Maybe I *want* people to believe that I'm with Harry. Maybe I want to actually *be* with Harry!"

"Slight problem there," Ginny said. "One, he seems to be over you, and two, he also seems to have a girlfriend."

"You're cruel."

"No, I'm realistic," Ginny said. "Listen, when the first guy who comes up to you, which, I promise you, will be very soon, asks you out, for Merlin's sake and our sanity (not to mention yours), say yes. You can't move on until you've started dating again..." Ginny eyed me and then corrected herself. "Until you've started dating."

"Ha ha," I muttered. "Very cute." But at the same time, I knew it was true. I really never had dated before...and that did seem to be the best solution to my problems. I sighed. "Fine. The next guy who

comes up to me asking me out, I will say yes to..." I trailed off, thinking how wonderful it would be if that next guy was...

"No!" Ginny said firmly. "No thinking of Harry. Not in that sense. Not any more."

"How the Hell do you do that?" I asked Ginny in amazement.

Ginny shrugged and jumped off my bed. "It's one of my many amazing talents," she told me, and then left my room.

And so here I am, still sitting in my room (what's new?), dazed and confused. I want this horrible feeling of loss to disappear, and Ginny's certain that dating someone will be just the trick. But at the same time, I don't *want* to be over Harry. I want to be *with* Harry.

How can he be with Parvati? I just want to know that much, at the very least. I mean, honestly! Parvati? I thought Harry hated girls who giggled constantly... Wait, no, there was also Cho. But then again, I had assumed he learned from that horrible past experience.

Argh! Why Parvati? Parvati likes to hang on to her men, even after she's finished with them! Why couldn't Harry have chosen Padma? Or maybe even Luna? Those two would certainly let bygones be bygones. Especially Luna. Actually, I'm not even sure Luna would be aware of what was happening...

I honestly don't know what to do. I guess I should follow Ginny's advice. I mean, she was right before. If I had *only* followed it then...

Well, my life wouldn't be one hundred percent miserable, that's for sure.

October 16

How does she do it? How does Ginny Weasley know exactly what's going to happen? I swear, if I didn't have such an aversion to the subject, I would swear Ginny had seer blood in her.

So, I was sitting at my usual table in the library, trying to finish the essay McGonagall has just given us, when all of a sudden, Terry Boot sat next to me. I looked up, surprised.

“Terry!” I exclaimed, setting my quill down. “We’re not planning on having a DA meeting for a while...Harry’s been extremely busy, and I know it’s been two months, but...”

“No, that’s not it...” Terry trailed off, looking away. Then he turned his attention back to me. “I heard that you and Harry are no longer going out?”

I felt myself tense, and forced myself to smile. “Heh...eh, actually, that would be false.” Terry’s face fell, and I rushed to correct myself. “No! What I mean is that we were never...never going out,” I managed to say. I was proud that not one sob merged its way into my throat. “So, er...yeah,” I finished, rather lamely.

“Brilliant!” Terry exclaimed, looking very happy, much happier than I must have felt. “So, Hermione, I know that we don’t know each other that well, but I was just wondering if, since this weekend is a Hogsmeade weekend, whether you’d...er...you’d like to go with me?”

“As in a date?” I asked slowly, eyeing Terry curiously.

“Well, er...yeah.” Terry gave a nervous laugh.

I thought back to what Ginny had told me, and what I had promised. Taking a deep breath, and hoping to Merlin that this wasn’t a mistake, I put on a smile and replied, “Sure, Terry, I’d love to go with you.” Terry beamed at me and I gave a little laugh. He told me he’d meet me outside the gates, and then left me to my studies.

I must admit, it feels good to have this affect on a male - to know that they were nervous asking *you* out.

I guess I should go tell Ginny. Goodness knows she’ll want to know so that she can begin choruses of, “I was right!”

October 17

I spoke to Ginny last night. She did not, as I predicted, break out into song about how she was right. Instead, she gave me a smug smile. Not sure which one is worse, honestly...

After her smugness wore off, she began babbling about preparations.

"We'll have to do your hair," Ginny said excitedly, almost jumping out of her seat. "Oh, nothing too fancy," Ginny added, seeing my doubtful look, "not like what you did for the Yule Ball, but just so that it's out of your eyes...maybe half pulled back? I don't know, we'll see... And we have to choose the right outfit, and, oh! I bet Lavender will want to help."

"La-Lavender?" I sputtered. "Oh, please, Ginny, no. The last thing I need is the energizer bunny involved in my love life."

"But Lavender's really good at this type of stuff," Ginny insisted. "Plus, I'll have to leave to get ready for my date."

"Your date?" I asked, eyeing Ginny curiously. "And who might the charming young man (or is it men?) be?"

"Ha ha," Ginny frowned at me. "You know all those rumors about me going out with multiple guys are just that – rumors, right?"

"I know Ginny," I smiled at her. "I was just teasing. Anyway, who is it?"

"Well..." Ginny paused. "Promise not to make fun of me?"

"Why on *earth* would I make fun of you when my life is so screwed up?" I asked her, raising an eyebrow.

"True," Ginny acknowledged. "Well, it's...it's Neville."

"As in Neville Longbottom?" I asked. Ginny nodded. "As in Neville Longbottom who took you to the Yule Ball?"

"How many bloody Neville Longbottoms do we know?" Ginny demanded impatiently.

"I was just being annoying, Gin," I assured her. "Anyway, I think it's wonderful."

"Really?" Ginny asked me cautiously.

"Of course!" I exclaimed. "I've been wanting you two to get together since the Yule Ball. You two were so cute together. So, is that the mysterious man you've been meeting?"

"Yes," Ginny said with a laugh. "That's him alright – Neville Longbottom, my mysterious tall, dark, and handsome man."

So, the Hogsmeade trip is tomorrow, around 3. Ginny and Lavender are coming up to my room around 12 to perfect me for the date.

Saying I'm scared is a huge understatement. I think I'd be more willing to face Voldemort than being made over.

Merlin, I *am* screwed up.

Chapter 6

October 18

Oh Merlin. One of these days I swear, I swear, I will follow through with my promise and kill Ginny Weasley. That woman is insane. Make up. Pink. Preppy. Me. Me! Has she gone daft? Me? In pink? And here I thought she was my friend.

“Hermione!” Ginny practically yelled into my ear, plopping herself next to me on my couch (I knew someday I’d regret giving her the password to the Heads Tower – perhaps I’ll change it one day). I pretended to ignore her and continued with my knitting (the elf hats were on low supply – poor elves. I know how much they adore my creations). “*Hermione!*”

I closed my eyes, groaned, and replied, in an ersatz sweet and cheerful voice, “Yes, Ginny.”

“I do believe that you have a date in merely four hours,” she informed me.

“Your belief is correct,” I replied. “Therefore, I only have so much time to make one hundred of these things before I have to go.”

Ginny sat there, goggling at me. “Have you gone mental, Hermione?” she asked me in a whisper.

I laughed. “Me? Mental? I believe that’s you, Gin,” I scoffed lightly.

“Hermione! Don’t you remember?” She prodded me painfully on the side of my arm as if she was a toddler.

“Not really, no.”

Ginny groaned. “We’re supposed to get you ready for your date, Herm!”

“Call me Herm one more time,” I growled, “and I will call you Ginevra for the rest of your life.”

“Fine,” Ginny sniffed. “You’re avoiding what I said, Hermione.”

“Which was?” I asked, absentmindedly.

“Me. Lavender. You. Date. Prepare,” Ginny prompted.

That certainly caught my attention, not to mention annoyed me. I decided to ignore that and concentrate on more important things – such as inappropriate sentence structuring.

“Glad to know you can speak in coherent sentences, Gin,” I told her acidly, clicking my knitting needles madly.

“Uncalled for,” Ginny said lightly, proving my point, while fiddling with a stray strand of red hair. “Answer the question, please.”

I put down my knitting and sighed. “Fine. For your information, it’s only 11:15. We’re not supposed to meet up until 12.”

“Lavender and I discussed it,” Ginny said, “and in your case, we decided that we needed more time to make you look presentable for today.”

“How touching,” I said, slightly insulted. “I wasn’t aware that I was that ugly.”

“Ugly, never!” Ginny exclaimed. “Just not date-worthy.”

“I honest-to-Merlin despise you sometimes,” I informed Ginny.

“The hate is all worth it,” Ginny smiled. “Especially when you see the result of it all.” A loud banging sounded from outside. “That must be Lavender!” Ginny exclaimed, overly chipper.

“Great,” I groaned. “The energizer bunny.”

“What?” Ginny asked, utterly confused. Apparently she hadn’t really heard me the last time I said it.

"It's a muggle thing," I sighed, wishing for a bit that Harry was here, as he would i probably /i know what I was referring to. But he was at Quidditch practice, which just started up today. True, it was a bit later than usual, but this was due to the fact that a torrential storm wrecked the Quidditch pitch. The teachers decided not to repair it for a while. They were punishing the students for a huge food fight, yes, *food fight*, that occurred in the Great Hall a few weeks ago, which I never bothered to report as I find such things childish and simply time consuming.

Ginny went over to the portrait hole and let Lavender in, who virtually bounced into the room, a huge bag hanging from her wrist, which she handed to Ginny.

"I'm so excited!" she squealed, her eyes shining at the prospect of making me over. "Oh, this will be so much fun!" She bounded over to me and flung herself on me, almost causing my knitting needles to plow themselves into her skin. "Oh, Hermione! This will be such a girl day. Well, a girl three and a half hours," Lavender looked puzzled for a moment, but ploughed on. "But oh! Oh! I'm so excited!" She bounced some more and then looked at me from her place on my lap. "Can you tell? Sometimes I overreact to things."

"No," I said dryly. "You've hidden yourself very well. Your enthusiasm is almost nonexistent." Ginny caught my eye and giggled. I remembered why I adore that girl: she laughs at incredibly stupid things, making me feel as if I'm not exceedingly posh.

"Well, mark my words, I *am* excited," Lavender sighed. "And just imagine. Terry Boot" (she said his name as if he were a god) "asking *you* out! This is so perfect Hermione." Lavender looked as if she was in her own little world, but surprised both Ginny and me by shaking herself out of her reverie and taking on a business like tone. "Okay," she instructed, getting up and pulling me with her, allowing my knitting materials to clatter to the ground. "We need to get started. We only have three and a half hours to get you from looking absolutely..." she eyed me head to toe and gave a small groan, "...plain to drop dead gorgeous."

"I happen to be perfectly comfortable with the way I look!" I piped up as Lavender dragged me up the stairs to my room, Ginny in tow, along with Lavender's incredibly enormous bag.

"It doesn't matter if you're happy with how you look," Lavender told me impatiently. "It matters if Terry does."

"I think that my looks aren't all that important to him," I trailed off. "Or at least he's okay with them. He did ask me out the way I was...am."

"Hermione, you simply can't be yourself on this date," Lavender sighed. "At least not physically. Now, either let us do this make over," Lavender grunted as she jerked me into my room, "or I swear I'll *petrificus totalus* you."

"Fine," I huffed. "Just fine." Lavender led me to a vanity that came with the room, which I never used. I unwillingly plopped down onto the chair as Ginny and Lavender placed themselves on either side of me.

Lavender took a lock of my hair and made a little, "Tch," sound. "This simply won't do," she sighed, and Ginny agreed.

"Ginny, the hair straightening materials please." Ginny reached into Lavender's bag and took out two 12-ounce bottles of Sleezeaky's Hair Potion, a hair product I hadn't used since the Yule Ball.

"24 ounces?" I gawked. "Are you sure I need that much? I used less in fourth year. Only a bottle."

"Believe me," Lavender said knowingly. "Your hair has increased in bushiness since then, not to mention thickness. Now, let us do our job."

"Fine," I replied stubbornly once more, staring intently at the mirror.

"No, no, no." Lavender shook her head. "That won't do. We simply can't let you see yourself while we do this."

I stared at her reflection. "Why on earth not?"

"It ruins the suspense of it all!" Lavender gushed. She turned around my chair, forcing me to look at the two of them.

"I hate you right now," I growled.

"But you'll hate us and be beautiful in a few short hours," Lavender beamed. "Now, let's get started."

Ginny took out a very sturdy looking comb while Lavender literally poured the hair potion on top of my head. Ginny combed it through my hair, working out the tangles at first. Once that was finished with, Lavender added some more, and Ginny combed my hair directly down while holding her wand behind the lock of combed hair and straightening it. This procedure continued for about twenty agonizingly long minutes, until just about all the hair potion was indeed gone and my scalp felt as if it were on fire.

"My head is going to hurt for days," I moaned.

"But you'll look beautiful," chimed in Lavender. "After all, pain is the price of beauty."

"It's a stupid price," I mumbled. "Idiotic. Women are insane."

"Not insane," Lavender replied, affronted. "They just care about looking perfect for that certain guy." She gave out a small giggle.

"I reiterate," I replied, "Women are crazy."

My scalp endured more pain as Lavender took over comb duties and pulled my hair tightly into what I could only guess was a ponytail. Once that was done, the make-up came out – assorted blush, eye shadows, lipsticks, and mascaras.

"This is ridiculous!" I cried out, looking at all the cosmetics.

"No," Ginny replied from my side. She was leaning against the wall, arms across her chest, lips twitching into a smile "It's simply sensible."

"I call it a waste of money," I grumbled.

“Yes,” said Lavender, “well, you’ll look—”

“Beautiful, I know, I know,” I finished for her, rolling my eyes in disgust.

Lavender and Ginny began concentrating *extremely* hard. They raised various make-up palates to my cheek, trying to decide which season I was. They finally decided on winter, and the two proceeded applying lipstick, mascara, etc., to my normally make-up-less face. Some more grunts escaped from my very unhappy lips.

Once my make-up was finished an hour later (it’s insane how long applying make-up can take – insane; most females, like Lavender, will probably end up spending 1/3 their life applying make up, only to wash it off every single night), the next task was my clothing.

Lavender pillaged my college, throwing jumper after jumper, blouse after blouse, and skirt after skirt out of my closet. Not even the outfit I wore on my birthday was up to her fashion standards.

“No, this won’t work, none of it will.” Lavender looked downtrodden for a second, but then brightened up. “Good thing I brought clothes with me! And thank *Merlin* we’re the same size.”

“How do you know we’re the same size?” I asked Lavender suspiciously, certain now that she recently stalked me, as she poured out all the clothes onto my bed. I was amazed by how much she fit in there.

“I know these things,” Lavender repeated, answering my question. She stood me up and then searched through the clothes. She and Ginny chose possible outfits, one holding a shirt next to me and the other a pair of pants or shorts. After a numerous amounts of, “This won’t work,” they finally chose an outfit and shoved it into my hands. I made for my bathroom, but Ginny stopped me.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Ginny interrogated me.

“To go change...” I said, starting at her as if she was insane.

“Uh, uh,” Ginny said with a laugh. “No way.”

"Pardon?" I asked, completely confused.

"There are mirrors in there, Hermione," Ginny reminded me. "That ruins the whole surprise element."

"Anyway, you might try to apparate out of here," Lavender insisted.

"You can't apparate in or out of Hogwarts grounds," I said through gritted teeth. "One of these days, *one of these days*, I swear I will make you all read *Hogwarts: A History*."

"Sure you will," Lavender said in a bored voice. "Now change."

I put on the clothes, not paying attention to what I was going to end up wearing, but simply happy for the first time in my life that I wasn't at all self-conscious about my body. Once I had completed the outfit, Lavender and Ginny had me model myself by twirling around slowly.

"Oh, Merlin," Lavender gushed, nearly crying. "Hermione, you look...spectacular."

"Oh, you really do!" Ginny exclaimed. "Oh! You just have to see!"

I walked up to my floor length mirror, and my mouth dropped, but certainly not in happiness. My hair was incredibly straight and was in a high ponytail, the ends curling as if I was a cheerleader from one of those horrible fifties movies I used to watch with my babysitter before Hogwarts. The make-up looked fine, as all it did was accentuate my eyes, cheekbones, and complexion. But my outfit...my outfit was simply a no – at least for me.

First off, I was in a jean skirt. In the middle of October. Either Lavender was really stupid, or incredibly insane. I was wearing a pink, *pink*, turtleneck, and a blue jean jacket to match the skirt. Finally I was wearing fur boots, which was simply pointless. Boots and a jean skirt? Honestly.

I grimaced once more, and then turned to glare at Lavender and Ginny.

"What?" Ginny looked surprise. "What is it?"

"This is not me," I said simply, pointing to my outfit and hair. "This is just not me. I don't *have* straight, bouncy, cheerleader worthy hair. I don't *wear* pink, or skirts that I should wear when there *isn't* a chance of frostbite. I don't *wear* fake fur, or *real* fur for that matter. This is just note, Ginny!"

"But it looks great," Lavender pouted, looking hurt.

I rolled my eyes. "It can't possibly look good," I explained, "if I don't look a thing like Hermione. Right now, I look like a carbon copy of you, Lavender. Not that you aren't pretty!" I rushed, seeing Lavender's eyes sparkle with tears. "You are, and your look looks great on you, and people *like* you. But not on people like *me*. Thank you for all you did, but I must insist that you leave so I may use this last," I looked at my watch and discovered I still had thirty minutes left, "half hour to prepare for *my* date." Lavender and Ginny gathered their supplies and left, disappointed (Lavender more so than Ginny), and I got to work.

I ran the water in the sink and quickly washed out all of the hair potion, then used my wand to dry out my hair. It was bushy and a mess. Perfect. I tied it up quickly in a light ponytail, feeling very happy with the way I looked.

Next I wiped off all the make-up, because it truly was just pointless. After finishing with my little excursion, which involved about all the tissues I had and about a gallon of water (the cleaning spell didn't work, much to my disgust), I ripped off that horrible outfit and opted for a nice blue blouse (blue is my color – not pink), a simple pair of jeans, and a pair of black loafers.

And so now I've finished preparing for my date, and I'm sitting here, on my bed, as usual, waiting until it's time to head downstairs, which will be in just a few minutes. I heard Harry come back from practice a little while ago, but he went to his room. I think Ginny warned him earlier not to bother me due to the make-over, although I'm not sure she told him about the make-over, which no longer exists, anyway.

I'll be quite honest here: I'm a bit nervous about this date. I don't think it's because I'm nervous about how Terry will think of me. I'm nervous

about whether or not this is the right thing. I'm doing this to get over Harry, but I'm not sure if I honestly want to be over Harry.

And really, I just realized I liked him a few days ago. How can it be wise to already try forgetting about him?

I mean, he has a girlfriend now, true, but still. Oh, I don't know. I guess I'll just have to go on this date and hope for the best.

I must go. My date's waiting. I'll fill you in later so that twenty years from now I can laugh at how pitiful my life was.

Chapter 7

October 18

So, today was the date. All in all, it started out rather well. Terry was a complete gentleman, and we talked about NEWTs for a good portion of the time, which was just fine by me.

But, really, the date was far from extraordinary.

Mostly because of Harry, I suppose. He was the reason I was tardy meeting Terry. Well, alright, I chose to talk to Harry, but still.

Then there was his reaction to finding me dating Terry in Hogsmeade...dear Merlin, I thought he was going to kill someone...

Maintaining my punctuality, I headed out of my room and into the common room, where I found Harry, about to leave.

"Hey, stranger," I greeted him, smiling.

"Hey," he replied, rumpling his hair, looking distracted.

"Where are you headed?" I asked, tucking a strand of my own messy hair behind my ear as I grabbed my cloak that I had precariously tossed on the coat hook the night before and secured it under my chin.

"Date," Harry replied, "with Parvati." I felt myself tense up.

"That's nice," I said, not catching his eye, and forcing myself to smile. "Hogsmeade?"

"Where else?" Harry laughed. I laughed as well. Then Harry, being the astute man he is, noticed that I appeared to be heading out as well. "What about you? Where are you going?"

I hesitated. "Just out," I told him finally. "You know. Around the grounds." I didn't know why I didn't just tell him I had a date. There

was nothing wrong with it. Maybe I was simply worried about how he'd react. After all, when was the last time I had been on a *real* date? And the two boys were surprisingly protective of me, due to the fact that I was a girl. Despite that I could clearly take care of myself. But, old stereotypes die hard, and I could just imagine Harry killing Terry the second he found out.

But isn't that what you want? I asked myself. *A reaction?* Unexpectedly, I realized the answer to that was no. I wasn't going to make Harry jealous. That would just be stooping to low, especially for someone like me. I liked to think that I was above such petty behavior.

"Just out, huh?" Harry asked, raising an eyebrow. "A little dressed up for just going out around the ground."

"All I'm wearing is a blouse, jeans, and loafers," I replied, annoyed, pulling my cape tightly around me. "I'm just going to go by the lake, study underneath our tree..."

"I know you, Hermione," Harry replied. "You don't go walking around the grounds dressed like that. I know it may not be for other girls, but for *you*, this is you dressed up."

"I'm telling you," I snapped, a bit flustered by all of this, "I'm just going to enjoy an October's day." *Well, half of that's true...* I thought to myself.

"Why aren't you going to Hogsmeade?" Harry questioned.

"Because I don't want to!" I cried out. "Enough with the interrogations already!"

Harry ignored my outburst. "You're not going with Ron?" he asked curiously, staring at me oddly.

"Ron?" I asked, thinking automatically to all the people who assumed I had feelings for him. "*Ron?* Why on Earth would I go to Hogsmeade with Ron?"

“Because he’s your friend,” Harry said slowly, as if I was the slowest person to ever walk foot on this earth, which I was feeling at that moment.

“Right,” I said. “Forgot about that.” I laughed lamely. “No, I just want a day to myself. That’s all.” I felt my stomach clench. I was really laying it on thick, wasn’t I? When was the last time I lied to Harry? Never. I had never lied to Harry, yet here I was, doing just that.

It’s either that or looking as if you’re trying to make him jealous, I thought to myself. I’ll take this.

It was then that I noticed that I was supposed to meet Terry in five minutes. But how to get down without Harry noticing?

“Why don’t you go on ahead, Harry,” I urged. “They’re going to leave soon, and you should meet up with Parvati.”

“Right,” Harry said, running his fingers through his hair again. Did he always do that when he was nervous? Why had I never noticed? “I’ll catch you later, then.” He headed out the door and left me standing there.

My heart hammering with the idea of being late, I endured two minutes of standing still before I walked out of the door myself, containing the urge to run. I finally got outside, and to my relief, Harry was nowhere in sight. I spotted Terry standing near the gates, just as we planned.

“Hi, Terry,” I said, running up to him. “Sorry I’m late.”

“By about thirty seconds,” he laughed. “Don’t worry about it.” We stood there for a minute, painfully awkward. Finally he said. “You look nice.”

“Thanks,” I smiled. I motioned my head towards the group of third years and above. “Shall we go?”

“Right!” Terry said, looking mortified for just standing there. “Let’s.” We joined the crowd and were quiet for a bit, and then Terry began talking.

“How do you feel about the upcoming NEWTs?”

“Oh, gosh,” I began, not sure where to start. “Well, nervous of course. I mean, it could be the beginning or end to all my plans! Not that I have any, at the moment. Right now, I’m not sure what I want to be...maybe an auror... That’s what Harry wants to do,” I added as a side note. “It’d be nice to go into a career with someone I know.”

I noticed that there was a rather pained expression on Terry’s face.

Right, I reprimanded myself. Note to self: do not talk about a guy your date was brainwashed to think you just dated. This is a big no

“Or maybe a teacher,” I rushed on. “Return to Hogwarts...it is my home. But, yes, I’m just concentrating now on studying as much as I can.”

“Same,” Terry nodded. “I’m going to start up a study schedule after the holidays. I think five months will be enough time. I’m hoping.” He gave a laugh.

We continued talking about school and NEWTs, which lasted us the entire walk to Hogsmeade.

“So,” Terry said, clapping his hands together uncertainly once we reached our destination. “What should we do?”

“Well...” I trailed off. “We could always go to Honeydukes, or the Owlery, or the Three Broomsticks.”

“Or we could just walk,” Terry suggested with a shrug. I was uneasy about this idea. Just walk? Did we really have enough in common to just walk around Hogsmeade? However, I decided to give it a go.

“All right, then,” I replied. “Let’s walk around.” We exchanged grins and started up conversation once more.

“If there was anything you could convince all of Hogwarts to do,” Terry asked, “what would it be?”

“Easy,” I replied immediately. “I’d have everyone read *Hogwarts: A History*.” Terry stared at me for a while, and then began to laugh. “Hey!” I replied, laughing as well. “I’m absolutely serious!”

Terry looked at me. “Are you really?”

“Yes!” I exclaimed, pretending to be indignant. “You wouldn’t believe how many times I’ve had to remind people that you can’t apparate in or out of Hogwarts! It’s simply *ridiculous*, not to mention tiring.”

“You can’t apparate in or out of Hogwarts?” Terry asked with wide eyes.

I stared at him for a moment, gave a sigh, and closed my eyes in exasperation. “No, you can’t.” I opened my eyes once more to see Terry grinning broadly. “Hey!” I exclaimed, giving him a little slap on the arm. “That is *not* funny. That’s the one thing that really gets to me!”

“Is it really?” Terry asked.

“All right, no,” I replied with a small laugh. “There are a lot of things that get to me: the fact that Harry and Ron never do their homework, although sometimes it’s rather cute how helpless they are; the never ending bickering that occurs between Ron and I. I mean, honestly, when will it end? The fact that no one seems to be able to answer questions in class. The cruel abuse that house-elves undergo.”

“So a lot of things,” Terry finished off.

“Just about,” I replied. “What about you? What gets under your —”

“Hermione!” I heard a familiar voice call angrily from behind me. I swallowed. The voice was too familiar. Turning around, I placed a nervous smile on my face.

“Hello there, Harry,” I said, giving a small wave. “Parvati.” Parvati was staring up, quite as anxious as myself, at a seething Harry. To my right, Terry was giving me a look that plainly said, “You never went out, huh?”

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked through gritted teeth.

I turned to Terry. "Give me a second," I told him, giving him an apologetic smile. I marched over to Harry, gave Parvati the smile as well, and dragged him over to the side.

"Calm down," I told him, immediately.

"Calm down?" Harry asked. "Calm *down*? You *lied* to me, Hermione! You never lie to me!"

"Well I'm sorry!" I said huffily. I notice that my tone of voice wasn't going down well with Harry. "Really, I am," I told him, sincerely. "It's just, well...the thing is..." I grasped for the words. "I've never been on a date before," I finally said. "Not really. That thing with Krum...it was quick. It wasn't really dating. It was the Yule Ball, a snog once or twice..."

"You snogged Viktor Krum?" Harry asked me, wide eyed. Apparently this had been the wrong thing to say.

"Well...I mean...what I meant to say...that is..." I scrambled, my words in complete disarray. "Yes, I did!" I said finally. "What does it matter?"

"Nothing," Harry said, taken aback by my forwardness. "I just wish you had told me."

"Oh, yes," I replied scathingly. "Because all 14-year-old girls tell their best guy friend who they *snogged*."

"Right," Harry said, uncertainly.

I took a deep breath, then continued with the speech I began earlier on. "My point is, I wasn't sure how you'd react...how *either* of you would react," I corrected myself, "I mean, face it Harry, the three of us have an odd relationship. Two guys and a girl? Who are close?"

"Obviously not *that* close," Harry said under his breath. I chose to ignore his statement.

"We were bound to run into something like this sooner or later," I continued. "Face it: you two are beyond protective of me. You don't even let me fight my own battles! I can't argue with Draco Malfoy without you two threatening to hex him into obliviation, and you both know perfectly well that my hexes are absolutely adequate for such a job. And me? On a *date*?" I gave a laugh and shook my head. "You two would probably attack Terry if I told you we were dating."

"We would not!" Harry protested.

"Ha," I replied. "Harry, what was the first thing that came into your mind when you saw Terry and I walking? I bet you your Firebolt it wasn't, 'What is Hermione doing here when she said she wasn't going to Hogsmeade?'" I raised an eyebrow at Harry while he remained silent. "Well?" I prompted.

"Fine," Harry responded stubbornly. "Yes, my first thought was how I wanted to kill him, but..."

"Exactly," I replied, happy to be proven right. "And Ron would probably have turned him into a toad. Thank God you have more discipline than he does," I sighed. "Like I said, I was...I was nervous about your reaction." I played with the hem of my cloak. "I mean, honestly, Harry, it's hard being the only female in the group without the two of you breathing down my neck about the guys I date." I looked up to meet Harry's eyes.

"Right," he said finally. "Look, I'm sorry that you thought I'd explode, I promise I won't."

"I sense a but," I said dismally.

"But," Harry continued, "I'm not going to stop who I am."

"What does that mean?" I demanded.

"You said it yourself in fifth year," Harry shrugged. "I have a 'saving-people thing'."

"Wh-what does that have to do with this?" I sputtered. "Voldemort hasn't set me up with Terry, you know, Harry."

“What I mean,” Harry said, “is that if he does *anything* wrong, anything to *hurt* you, I swear I will kill him.”

“What do you identify as wrong?” I asked Harry, leaning up against the outside wall of a shop, my arms across my chest, frowning.

“Touching you in anyway whatsoever,” Harry replied lightly.

“Merlin Harry!” I exclaimed, absolutely annoyed. “I can take care of myself. You don’t see any of Parvati’s friends telling her that they will kill *you* if you so much as touch her, do they?”

“Well, I mean...”

“Do you think so little of me?” I demanded, straightening up. “Do you honestly think I am unable to protect myself from crazy, hormonal, teenaged guys? I’m seventeen Harry, not six.”

“You’re taking what I said completely...”

“I can have a boyfriend without you looking out for me,” I cut him off. “You don’t see me jumping on your back about Parvati, do you?” *Only because you have self-control*, I reminded myself. *Oh, do shut up*, demanded another voice.

“Stop it!” Harry said firmly. He looked peeved now as well. “I know fully well that you can look out for yourself,” he replied. “How could I not after being around you for seven years?”

“Well, if you think you need to —”

“I have a saving people thing, Hermione,” Harry repeated. “You said it yourself. And it’s true. That includes a protecting people thing. I automatically do it. Is it so bad that I care enough about you that I want to protect you?”

“From my date?” I asked incredulously, although at the same time I did find it sweet that he felt that strongly. “You want to protect me from my date?”

“Hermione, you have no idea how...” Harry fished for a word, “...how...insane guys can be. They do some stupid things.”

“Like sneak in on a girl while she showers?” I asked, unable to contain a smirk as Harry blanched.

“Yeah,” he said weakly. “Like that.” He took a deep breath. “I just want to make sure that he doesn’t go insane with you, or that you don’t do anything you regret,” Harry finished resolutely.

I couldn’t help but laugh. “I had this talk with my mother when I was 14, Harry,” I told him, giving him a pat on the arm. “I honestly hope you don’t believe that I’d be stupid enough to have sex during my NEWT year.”

“Well, he’s a guy,” Harry shrugged. “I know what guys think.”

“Oh,” I said, playfully mocking Harry, happy that we could discuss a subject with such ease. “Is that’s what’s on your brain 24/7? Should I be protecting myself from you, then?”

“Ha, ha,” Harry said. “Very cute.” I couldn’t help but smile. It was then that I heard a loud and decisive cough.

I turned around and saw that Parvati and Terry, both looking extremely bored, were staring at us.

“Oh, Merlin!” I exclaimed, looking at my watch. “We’re horrible dates...we’ve been ignoring them for ten minutes.”

“Damn,” Harry replied. There went his fingers into his hair. “I’ll see you later then?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied, as we went to rejoin our dates. “Patrols.” Harry left with Parvati, who was glaring at him, and I was left with Terry.

“I’m so sorry!” I began in a rush. “Harry was just being a bit over protective before, me being the girl in the group – you know how Harry and Ron are – so I had to put him in his place, and then we lost track of time...”

Terry closed his eyes and sighed.

"I'm *really* sorry!" I said again, clasping my hands together as if I was begging.

"It's okay," Terry replied, smiling. "How about we head over to the Three Broomsticks?" And so we did.

So other than that little catastrophe, the date went okay. I mean, I surprisingly didn't run out of things to say with Terry, which is a good sign, right? Ginny says it is.

But, I can't help thinking about how I had more fun with Harry during those ten minutes, even if we were arguing for a bit of them, then I did with Terry the entire day.

That can't possibly be a good sign, can it?

Oh, I'm absolutely confused. This date seemed to only reinforce my feelings for Harry.

And I can't stop thinking about that look he gave me when he first saw me with Terry. Was it a look of rejection?

No. That's just my wishful thinking. After all, Harry's over me.

I just wish it was that simple for me to get over him.

Oh well. Terry asked me out on another date, and I accepted. Hopefully this one will go better, and hopefully I can go the date without mentioning Harry.

Good luck with that on my part.

Chapter 8

October 29

Well, it's been an interesting eleven days... Yes, I'm still going out with Terry. Now we're officially dating. Ginny couldn't be happier.

Harry, however, is not pleased with me one bit. I wish he would get use to my having a boyfriend. It's really my fault, I guess. If I had gone out before (as if anyone would have asked me), maybe he'd be okay with it...

"Bye Terry!" I said, as he made his way to his NEWT muggle studies class and I left for my break of the day. Terry leaned in and gave me a swift kiss on the lips, then left me in the hallway, rather giddy.

This was nice. I couldn't keep that a secret. It was wonderful, actually, to realize that someone wanted you. It made you feel powerful. And I liked Terry. He was sweet, and we got along, and had a lot of things in common.

Actually, we had everything in common. Sometimes that made it a bit boring.

I shook the thought away, determined to not think negatively about my boyfriend. In any case, a "Hermione!" cut off my thoughts. I turned around quickly, finding myself face to face with Harry.

"Hello," I greeted him, smiling happily. Harry didn't smile back. At least he didn't appear angry.

"Hi," he said, his eyes darting back and forth as if making sure the hall was cleared. "Could I er...talk to you?"

"Sure," I replied, making my way to our common room, Harry beside me. "Go ahead."

"Let's wait until we get to the tower," Harry responded, speeding up his pace.

Curious, I sped up as well, and in two minutes time we were sitting comfortably by the fire in our silent common room.

“Well?” I prodded him.

Harry remained silent, until he finally blurted out, “I don’t think you should continue dating Terry!”

I stood there for a moment, in complete and utter shock. Once I finally registered what Harry had just said, I laughed, certain he was joking. “Harry,” I said through fits of laughter, “where on earth did you come up with such an idea?”

“He’s dangerous!” Harry protested.

“You’re actually serious?” I asked him, stopping mid-laugh. Harry nodded firmly, and I stood up, annoyed. “You’re telling me that you think Terry Boot, prefect, one of the top students, perfect gentleman, and over-achiever is *dangerous*?” I demanded.

Harry paled. “Er...he could be.” I rubbed my temple with my fingers.

“Harry, you really need to quit this,” I said after a long pause. “I realize that it’s difficult to see me dating, and that as I’m the girl you feel it’s your role as...” I paused, not wanting to continue, as I knew what I was about to say would pang me, but knowing I needed to, “...as my sort of surrogate brother the look after me, but I *told* you – I can look out for myself.” I opened my eyes to find, for a fleeting second, the look Harry had on his face the day of our huge argument – a look of utter disbelief.

However, a moment later it was gone, and I couldn’t help but wonder if I had imagined it. Harry sighed, then stood up and walked over to me. “You’re right,” he told me. “I just...I’m not used to it, I guess.” Harry gave a short laugh. “Who would have ever imagined six years ago that I’d be worrying about who you were dating?”

I laughed as well. “No one,” I replied truthfully. “That was an age of innocence. Voldemort was just an adventure to us, and Malfoy was simply an annoying git.”

“Malfoy’s *still* an annoying git,” Harry replied with a roll of his eyes. I couldn’t help but give an inelegant snort.

“Very nice,” I replied, smiling at him. “And true,” I added as an afterthought. I looked at my watch and felt my eyes widen.

“Oh Merlin!” I cried out.

“What?” Harry asked urgently.

“You have a class!” I cried out, poking Harry in the shoulder. “Why aren’t you in class?” I demanded.

“Well, I wanted to talk to you,” Harry said weakly.

“No!” I said. “No, never again. Go, go right now!” Harry stood there, and I pushed him towards the portrait hole and yelled, “GO!”

“Alright already!” Harry exclaimed, throwing up his hands. “I’m going. Sheesh. This is reason enough never to be late to a class.”

I shook my head and half sighed, half laughed. *That’s my Harry*, I thought, smiling. *Always letting things he feels must be done get ahead of his priorities*. I smiled a bit more then stopped. *Damn. Not my Harry. No. Parvati’s Harry. He’s just best friend Harry. I have my Terry...okay, so I have a Terry. But no Harry. There is no my Harry.*

“Oh Merlin,” I groaned. “Why do you let me suffer so?”

But now the obsessiveness of Harry seems to pale with my current problem. You see, Ginny came up to my room (again, I must change that password...I’ll put it on my list), intent on talking with me. Apparently I was leading a certain guy along – a guy that means a lot to her.

Three guesses whom she was talking about.

“How long is this going to continue?” Ginny demanded of me, pushing me lightly on my bed so I landed with an, “oomph.”

“Excuse me?” I asked incredulously. “What on earth are you talking about?”

“How long are you going to let him think you have feelings for him – lead him on?” Ginny glowered at me.

“I’m not leading Terry on!” I said immediately, in a rushed voice, knowing fully well that, that might just be the case.

Ginny stared at me for a second. “Not *Terry*, you prat,” she said impatiently. “My *brother*.”

“Ron?” I asked, looking rather stupid I bet from her reaction.

“No, Percy,” Ginny said sarcastically. “Of course Ron!”

“Er, Gin? This is a bit sudden, isn’t it? I mean, well...you didn’t seem to care all that much before,” I pointed out.

Ginny sighed and plopped down next to me. “That was before I realized what he must be going through, now that you’re dating someone.”

“Have you *seen* Ron lately?” I inquired of Ginny.

“No,” Ginny said swiftly.

“Then, well...how do you know that he’s, er, suffering?”

“Because I happen to *know* my brother. You know as well as I that his feelings towards you are nothing close to platonic!”

I rubbed my temples. “It’s possible they’ve changed...” I trailed off, not believing a word I said.

“Ha,” Ginny said. “Nice try, Hermione. Now, I want you to find *someway* to let Ron know that you don’t *return* his affections *without* breaking his heart.”

I gave a little laugh.

“Why’s that funny?” Ginny demanded.

“Nothing, nothing,” I replied, figuring she didn’t need to know that a similar sentence was on my list. “I’ll talk to him by this weekend, okay, Gin?”

“Alright,” Ginny said, appearing appeased. Her face quickly changed from anger to that of eagerness. “So, how goes it with Terry?”

I sighed. I shouldn’t have been surprised. With Ginny, it’s either her brother or my love life.

Merlin, how I wish she would stick her nose into somebody else’s life for once. I honestly believe that after all these years I deserve a break.

Chapter 9

October 31

So today's Halloween, and in a few hours we'll be having our feast. I'm really looking forward to it, as I've accomplished two things today:

1. I explained to Ron that I didn't return his feelings.

I expected when I spoke with him that he'd be mad, upset, heartbroken, or something along those lines. To my greatest surprise (and embarrassment), I found that it was quite the opposite. In fact, it seems that I had been right. What a surprise, hmm? I must remember to rub this in Ginny's face. Let no one tell Hermione Granger that she is wrong. Mark this as proof, dear diary, mark it...

"I'm going out for a bit," I told Harry, as I crossed our common room. Harry was seated next to the fireplace, while he used the broomstick servicing kit I bought him for his thirteenth birthday to tweak his Firebolt. Personally, I find the mixture of fire and straw rather a bad idea, but to each their own. And he had a wand to put it out when it caught on fire anyway.

"Without a cloak?" Harry asked me suspiciously, looking up from his broom.

"Of course not," I sighed impatiently. "I'm going to go talk to Ron."

"Ron?" Harry asked. "Why?"

"Because he happens to be one of my best friends," I said slowly, as if I were speaking with a toddler. "And I think it a wise decision to talk to him once in a while." I paused, and then added, "Anyway, I have something to, er, discuss with him."

"Concerning?" Harry questioned, his broomstick work completely forgotten.

I gave a laugh. "Nothing that has to do with you, Harry," I replied. "Don't worry. I'm not going over there to discuss how much I hate you and find you a bother. That's why I have Ginny."

"Ha, ha," Harry said. "Very nice Hermione. I'm glad I mean so much to you."

I simply smiled, and with a wave of my hand I walked out of the common room, down the stairs, and into the Gryffindor common room, while I searched for Ron. I found him talking with Seamus and Dean, no doubt discussing Quidditch.

And indeed I was right, adding another point to my scorebook. As I walked up behind Ron, I heard him arguing with Seamus: "Are you bloody mental? The Chudley Cannons are ten times better than the *Irish!*"

I gave a small cough and Ron, startled, looked up at me.

"Hey, Hermione!" he greeted me, smiling happily. "Long time no see."

I laughed. "Yes, it's been ages. When was the last time I saw you again?"

"Well, what with all your Head Girl duties..." Ron put a finger to his chin in mock though, "I'd say not since lunch."

I laughed again. "I actually need a word with you, if you don't mind me interrupting your extremely important discussion about Quidditch, that is." I waited for a few second. Ron seemed pained as he looked between Seamus and myself. I gave him an impatient look and, sighing, he got up and joined me as I walked outside the Gryffindor common room.

"What's up?" Ron asked, as he leaned against the portrait of the Fat Lady, who was glaring down at him.

I looked around quickly to make sure we were alone, and then turned my attention to Ron.

"Hi Ron," I said with a nervous laugh.

“Ron?” I asked. “I don’t wish to sound as if I wanted you on the floor sobbing or anything, but honestly...this wasn’t exactly the reaction I thought I’d get from you.”

Ron took a few deep breaths so that he could speak coherently with me. "Hermione," he said finally. "I haven't had those type of feelings for you in months."

"*What?*" I exclaimed. "You...*what?*"

"Yeah," Ron nodded his head. "I realized over the summer that you were more of a sister to me than anything else."

I stood there in complete surprise. "Sister?" I asked. Ron nodded his head. "But...last month...Harry...food in my mouth..." I fought to speak articulately. "You sounded so worried when you asked if Harry and I were dating!" I exclaimed once I discovered that I did indeed still have the ability to speak.

Ron shook his head. "I wasn't upset," he said. "I was just surprised. I thought you two had been keeping something from me."

"Oh," came my one word response. Then I realized I had another question. "What about the perfume you bought me for my birthday?"

"Oh!" Ron exclaimed. "That? Parvati and Lavender said that I should get it for you. They were very insistent. In fact, they even had an exact brand in mind. It was very odd."

"How peculiar," I said bitterly, making a note to kill Parvati and Lavender later on for being so selfish.

"Yeah," Ron said. "Anyway, I realized I had feelings for someone else."

My ears perked up. "Really?" I asked him, curiously. "Who?"

Ron mumbled something that I couldn't hear, his ears going red.

"Sorry, I missed that."

Ron sighed. "Promise not to make fun of me?"

"Why on earth would I make fun of you?" I questioned him.

"Well..." Ron trailed. "It's..."

“Yes?” I prompted him.

“Well, you see...it’s Luna.”

“Luna?” I asked, surprised. “As in Luna Lovegood?”

“Yeah,” Ron said, his whole face now red.

“As in the Luna Lovegood you claimed to find annoying?” I questioned.

“She’s not that annoying!” Ron exclaimed. “I mean, sure she can be odd, but she’s really quite fun, and, well...she’s more *eccentric* than anything else, really.”

“Right,” I replied with a smile. “Well, have you talked to her yet?”

“Er, no, not really.”

I sighed. “Ron, why don’t you ask Ginny to talk to her for you?”

Ron shook his head. “No way. I don’t want anyone involved in this.”

“Trust me Ron,” I said, giving an exasperated sigh. “Tell Ginny. I know what I’m talking about.”

Ron raised his eyebrow. “*You?*” he asked me incredulously.

“Yes,” I replied, slowly. “*Me*. I’m pretty sure I’m right.”

Ron gave a short laugh. “*You?* Of all people? Giving me love advice?”

He was really getting annoying.

“What’s that supposed to me?” I demanded of Ron indignantly, crossing my arms stubbornly across my chest.

Ron shook his head in disbelief. “Only that you’re the most blinded person I’ve ever met when it comes to love.”

“*Excuse me?*” I said, completely offended.

“Honestly Hermione,” Ron said, “you know as well as I that you should dump Terry.”

“What?” I cried out. “Are you mental? Now I have *you* on my case as well? Why?”

Ron shrugged. “Just the small fact that your heart belongs to someone else.”

“Who?” I asked quickly. “*Who?*”

“Harry,” Ron replied simply.

I stood there in shock.

“Ha,” Ron said. “I’m right, aren’t I?”

A guttural sound escaped my mouth. “I...” I searched for the words, but found there was only one way to say it. “Yes, okay, you’re right.” Ron gave me a beaming smile. “But you’re also wrong. I’m trying to get over Harry, and if I do say so myself, I am doing a good job of it.”

“Why are you trying to get over him?” Ron asked me, confused.

“Because, you prat,” I said, giving Ron a small slap on the arm, “in case you haven’t noticed, Harry happens to have a girlfriend.”

“Oh,” Ron said, his face falling. “Right. I forgot about that.” He pondered for a moment then continued. “So you’re using Terry to get over him?”

“I’m not *using* Terry,” I replied, insulted. “I happen to *like* Terry very much. He’s...sweet...and...and smart...and obsessed with school...not to mention a prefect...has great grades...”

“He sounds like you,” Ron remarked.

“Exactly!” I exclaimed.

“Sounds like a boring love life to me,” Ron continued.

I glowered at him. I did not want anyone endorsing my idea. I was trying to get *rid* of it after all.

“Hey!” Ron said, backing up with his hands defensively in front of him. “Don’t kill me. I was just observing.”

“Yes, well, you observed wrong,” I replied obstinately.

Ron shook his head and laughed. “You honestly think you can get over Harry?”

“Yes!” I replied immediately. “In fact, I think I’m almost over him now.”

So, that was very successful. That conversation brings me to number two: I am over Harry

Yes! I’m certain of it. I know it only took two weeks, but I’m absolutely certain now that it’s all done with. I mean, honestly, it was just a boy. It’s not that hard to get over boys. It certainly wasn’t for me.

So now I’m going to head out to the feast. I’m sure I’ll see Ginny there. I’ll tell her that I was right. This will be fun. And then, to prove that I’m over Harry, I’ll go and converse with him and that bim— Parvati.

Oh, I am definitely over him.

To Do List:

- 1. Free the house-elves*
- 2. Convince Neville that the heliopaths Luna told him about in fifth year do not exist, and that it is indeed safe to go in for a career at the ministry if he chooses to*
- 3. Convince Ginny, Lavender, and Parvati that I do not need a boyfriend (check)*
- 4. While I’m at it, convince the three mentioned above that I am not neurotic*

5. Convince Harry that sneaking into my room and creeping into my bathroom while I'm in the shower is not a good idea of a joke, is an abuse of his power as Head Boy and having a room next to mine, and an absolutely perverted thing for him to do, especially as my best friend (check)

6. Break Ron's Heart without actually breaking it. (check)

7. Find a way to make Ginny cave via one of my expressions

8. Change the Head Room's password

9. Tell Ginny that I was right.

I walked into the Great Hall and, like every year, I was amazed by the amount of pumpkins they could fit in there. I know, by this time I should have expected it all, but sometimes I can't help but be surprised by the little things.

I saw Ron waving to me from the Gryffindor table. I smiled and sat next to him. Harry sat across from me and, to my delight, so did Parvati.

"Hello Parvati!" I said happily. Parvati eyed me hesitantly, but then smiled.

"Hi, Hermione," she replied, still smiling.

I felt as if someone was staring at me, and I turned to my side to find a suspicious Ginny.

"Yes?" I asked her.

"What the Hell is going on?" she whispered to me.

"What are you talking about?" I replied in a low voice.

"You're acting overly sweet to Parvati," Ginny commented.

"I've never been rude to her before."

"Yes, well, now that she's *his* boyfriend, is this really the time to act like miss happy go lucky?"

"That reminds me!" I told her, beginning to relish in what I was about to say. "I'm over Harry."

"What?" Ginny's jaw dropped.

"Yes," I said eagerly. "Oh, and get this! Ron's been over me for months." I smiled at her.

"*What?*" Ginny cried out.

"Yes," I said again. "Looks as if I was right."

"Oh, shut up," Ginny said. "Are you serious? He's over you?"

"He is," I nodded. "He's fallen for someone else."

"Who?" Ginny asked immediately.

"You'll have to ask him," I grinned. "I'm not telling you."

I turned my back to an annoyed Ginny and gave my attention to Harry and Parvati. I was about to begin conversing with the couple when something caught my eye. I immediately tapped an infuriated Ginny on the shoulder. "Do you see what she's doing?" I demanded of Ginny.

"See what who's doing?" Ginny said, clearly not interested.

"*Parvati!*" I cried. "She's throwing herself at Harry!"

"Why do you care if someone throws themselves at Harry?" Ginny raised her eyebrow. "Or is Miss Head Girl really not over Mister Head Boy?"

"Shut up, you prat," I said in an undertone. "I don't! I just don't like it when people throw themselves at my best friend! Now look what she's doing!"

Ginny rolled her eyes, then looked across the table.

"I see nothing," she replied. "All they're doing is holding hands."

"Exactly!" I cried out.

"What?" Ginny asked me, coughing in disbelief. "Are you kidding me?"

"No!" I said. "I mean, she's moving way too fast! Two weeks and she's already holding his hand? Why doesn't she just say, 'Come on up to my room and have sex with me!'" I gasped. "Oh Merlin! I bet that's what she's planning on doing!" I grabbed at Ginny's arm. "Harry's going to lose his virginity to a complete idiot who throws herself at random guys and is a complete slut!"

Ginny stared at me. "Hermione, what the bloody hell are you on?"

"I am *not* taking drugs, Ginny," I hissed at her.

"Then why did you just call Parvati a *slut* who throws herself at people?"

"Just *look* at what she's wearing!" I prodded Ginny.

Ginny looked at Parvati. "She's wearing the *uniform*," Ginny said through gritted teeth.

"Yes, she is!" I exclaimed. "But she's wearing it like...like a slut!"

"Like a slut?" Ginny asked me. "Are you *mental*, Hermione? She's wearing it like everyone else!"

"No, she isn't," I argued. "The top button of her shirt is open."

Ginny just sat there for a few minutes. "Hermione, the top button of *my* shirt is open," she said after a while. "So is the button of the majority of the girls here."

"Yes, well," I replied, a bit flustered, "hers is open in a sluttish manner."

"You *are* completely mental!" Ginny cried out. "Absolutely insane!"

"I am not!" I said. "Anyway, that's not all!"

"Oh Merlin," Ginny groaned. "You actually have *more*?"

"Yes!" I said eagerly. "She's holding Harry's left hand!"

"Yes, I believe we *have* indeed established that," Ginny commented.

"No, no, no," I continued. "That's not the point."

"Oh, there's actually a point to all of this?"

"Yes, there is," I glared at her. "The point is she should be on Harry's right side."

"Oh, his *right* side!" Ginny cried. "How stupid of me!"

"You don't get it," I told her.

"No, I don't," Ginny answered. "Is there anything to get?"

"YES!" I practically yelled at her. The entire table stared at me. "Er, yes, Ginny, I would love some gravy," I said lamely. The table exchanged looks and then returned to their meal. "Yes, there is something to get," I continued in a whisper. "Harry's left side is his weak side. She's holding his *left* hand. How inconsiderate can you be?"

"You know Harry's weak side?" Ginny asked me, dazed.

"Yes, well, one does notice these things after a while," I replied. "Oh my God!" I exclaimed, as I noticed another turn of events.

"What the bloody hell could possibly be wrong *now*?"

"She's joking with Harry!" I said, wringing my hands together.

"Oh no!" Ginny said, in mock horror. "No, it can't be possible!" She grabbed on to my arm and shook it violently. "Please tell me that this isn't happening!" She let go of me and gave me a look that clearly meant I had gone off the deep end.

"Ginny," I sighed. "Don't you see? Parvati is trying to get Harry's attention."

"Imagine that," Ginny said sarcastically. "A girlfriend trying to get attention from their boyfriend. How scandalous."

"But she would rather Harry pay attention than eat," I pointed out. "Oh! OH! She wants Harry to starve just so he can talk to her!"

"Calm down!" Ginny exclaimed, holding me down as I tried to pounce on Parvati. "Look! *Look!* She's giving him some snacks!"

"YOU'RE RIGHT!" I yelled (well as much as one can yell while trying to not get any attention). "She's giving him snacks! She's not giving him any fruit! All it is, is sugar, sugar, and *more* sugar!"

"Is this some weird thing that goes with the fact that your parents are denti...dencis...teeth people?" Ginny interrogated me.

"No," I said. "It has nothing to do with the fact that my parents are dentist. Parvati is trying to weaken Harry's immune system by depriving him of the necessary foods so that he'll be too weak to defeat Voldemort or do well on his NEWTs!"

"You know what?" Ginny told me, and I envisioned smoke coming out of her ears. "You need to go to the lake, stick your head in there for a full minute, and then, you know what else you need to do?" I stayed silent as I watched Ginny's anger grow. "You need to get over Harry!" She said the last three words through gritted teeth. Thankfully she has the ability to be angry with someone and still talk in a low voice.

When I heard the last sentence, I couldn't help but smile. "I *am* over Harry," I told her happily. "I already told you that, remember?"

Ginny stared at me for a few seconds, as if she could hardly believe what she was hearing. Then, for some reason, she rolled her eyes and turned her back on me.

She rolled her eyes at me!

The nerve of her, really.

So other than the fact that Ginny is blind to the fact that I am over Harry (I thought I was obvious when it came to that), the night was rather good. Of course, I had no one to rant to Parvati about after that (honestly, I can't sit there and watch my best friend be used now, can I?), as Ron spent the majority of the feast giving fleeting glances at Luna.

Ah, well. I think I have a date with Terry tomorrow. That will be bor-fun. Fun. Lots and lots of fun.

We can talk about...NEWTs!

Like every other day...

I'm oh so excited.

Chapter 10

November 2

My date with Terry was...all right, I'm not going to lie. It wasn't spectacular.

Terry is really sweet and endearing, and I like him very much, but there's only so many times one can discuss Transfiguration NEWTs, even me, without feeling as if they're dying from boredom. I honestly never believed I'd say such a thing, but it's true.

Meanwhile, Ginny is acting like the greatest prat in existence...

"You love him," Ginny said in a sing-song voice. "Hermione loves Harry, Hermione loves Harry..."

"I do *not* under any circumstances feel anything for Harry," I replied automatically, twiddling my hair in a bored manner. "Friends, Ginny. We're just *friends*. Once in a while, a male and a female can have a relationship with one another that is strictly platonic."

"Oh," Ginny replied, raising her eyebrow and perching her chin on her hands in interest. "Friends? Do friends honestly *harp* about their friend's girl friends?"

"If they *care* about their friends," I replied tensely, now pulling on my hair in annoyance.

"My Merlin, Hermione!" Ginny exclaimed, jumping up from the chair at that wretched vanity and plopping herself next to me onto my bed. "Did you even *listen* to the type of things that spilled out of your mouth about Parvati? It was completely unreasonable, and clearly sprouted from some sort of jealousy!"

"Jealousy?" I repeated with a laugh. "Ha! I'm positive every single thing I said was completely reasonable."

"Reasonable?" Ginny asked in an incredulous voice. "Do you call reasonable *this*?" She then went on to impersonate me: "Oh, Ginny! Parvati's holding his hand! Oh, Ginny! They're moving too fast! Oh,

Ginny! They're going to have sex and Harry's going to forget all about me! Oh, Ginny! Parvati's trying to poison Harry with sugary treats! Oh, Ginny! Oh, Ginny! Oh, Ginny! Parvati's holding his hand, Parvati's *talking* to him, Parvati's on his right side!"

"Left," I corrected, before quickly covering my mouth with my hand to silence myself to prevent further interrogations from Ginny. That failed miserably.

"What was that?" Ginny asked me. "*What* did you just say?"

"Er..."

"You see!" Ginny exclaimed. "This is *exactly* what I'm talking about, Hermione! You're head over heels!"

"My heels happen to be planted firmly to the ground, thank you," I replied obstinately with a little sniff.

Ginny gave a small, "Ha!"

"They are!" I insisted. "So I went a little overboard with the whole Parvati thing that night."

"A little?" Ginny poked me forcefully. "*A little?* I was just about ready to send you to Madam Pomfrey! You were absolutely, without a doubt, completely mental!"

"I'm just not used to Harry having a girlfriend," I continued coolly. "That's it. Nothing more, nothing less."

"Hermione Jane Granger," Ginny growled at me, standing up so that she towered over me. "I am absolutely *sick* of this!"

"Sick of what, exactly?" I countered, standing up myself.

"I am sick of your petty excuses!" Ginny cried out, flinging up her hands in frustration. "Honestly! Either get over him or dump Terry and tell Harry how you feel! I don't care which one you choose, but just *choose* one, because I have had it *up to here!*" Ginny raised her hand stiffly to just below her eyes, as if to demonstrate her amount of anger.

"I am absolutely, without a doubt, to quote you, completely and most definitely over Harry!" I cried out in irritation, slamming my hand into my pillow.

"You know what?" Ginny said, stomping away, "I can't take this anymore! You're impossible Hermione. You're just...impossible! I can't let your blindness occupy my entire life!" I was startled to find tears building up in Ginny's eyes. "It's horrible that you can't realize this, but there's only so much I can do, and I have done it! I have my own life, Hermione. I have my own boyfriend, and my own studies, and I have other friends. I just..." Ginny breathed in deeply and massaged her forehead with her fingers. "I just *can't*, alright?" With that she turned around and walked towards my door.

"Ginny!" I called after her, but she didn't turn around and left my room. I ran out as well to the top of the staircase, yelling after the redhead. "Ginny, wait! *Ginny!*" But she didn't wait.

I was completely alone.

I stood there in shock for a few minutes, then I finally got my head together and rushed downstairs and to the Gryffindor common room. I searched frantically for Ginny, even went to the sixth year girls' dormitory, yet she was nowhere in sight. I trudged back downstairs and flung myself on the couch Harry, Ron, and I used to sit in, closed my eyes, and groaned.

"What's up?" asked an overly perky voice.

"Oh no," I moaned, not needing to open my eyes to find out who it was. "No, no, no."

"Are you okay?" the voice asked. I opened one eye and my belief was confirmed – the energizer bunny.

"Hi, Lavender," I said weakly, pushing myself up. "You haven't seen Ginny anywhere, have you?"

"No, I haven't," Lavender replied, playing with a blonde tendril. "Why? Do you need her?"

"We just got into a huge fight is all," I sighed.

"What about?"

"Oh, it...er...it just concerns Harry," I responded meekly.

"Oh!" Lavender exclaimed, as if a light bulb had just switched on in her brain. "About how you're hopelessly in love with him?"

I felt myself turn to stone. "I am *not* helplessly in love with Harry," I replied through gritted teeth, feeling my hands turn into fists.

"You're not?" Lavender asked in complete surprise. "Funny. I always thought you were. I mean, the way you looked at him, in my opinion, and many others, made it painfully obvious."

By now my nails were cutting into my skin. "I do *not* have any feelings like that for Harry!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. The whole common room went silent as it stared at me.

Great, I thought. Just bloody perfect.

I closed my eyes in an attempt to rid myself of my anger, but found myself failing. So, I did the only thing I could think of.

I ran. I ran as fast as I could back to the Head common room, only feeling that it was safe to breathe once I had collapsed on our (Harry and my) *own* couch.

However, I realized that I wasn't alone. How, might you wonder? Well, someone talked to me, that's how.

"Hello, Hermione," Harry greeted me cheerily.

I rubbed my aching temples. "Hi, Harry."

"How are you?" he asked me with a worried tone.

"Oh fine," I grumbled. "I feel simply splendid." I took a deep breath and then sat up, and it was then I discovered Harry doing something I never in my life thought I'd see him do.

Harry James Potter was studying. For Transfiguration. And we didn't even have a test coming up.

"Er, Harry?" I asked tentatively.

"Uh huh?" came his reply as he removed his focus from his NEWT Transfiguration text book.

"What in the name of Merlin do you think you're *doing*?" I grilled him.

"Studying," he replied merrily.

"For *what*, exactly?" came my dubious reply.

"For the questions she McGonagall might ask in class," Harry answered, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. "You do it all the time." He gave a little shrug.

I gave a curt laugh. "True, but I'm *Hermione*. You're *Harry*. Studying and being obsessive about answering questions is my *thing*, Harry. It simply isn't yours."

"Well, I thought I'd take a page out of your book," Harry smiled.

I stared at him, still not understanding why he was doing this. "Right," I said finally. "You know what, I've had a *really* tough day, so I think I'm going to call it a night and get some sleep."

And so I left Harry to go back to his, I honestly can't believe I'm saying this, studying.

Honestly, who does he think he's fooling? I know that something is up! I mean really! Harry doesn't study for no reason at all. I will get to the bottom of this.

Oh, I miss Ginny already. She would've been able to help me with this.

Then again, there is one more Weasley in this school. True, not as useful as Ginny can be when it concerns figuring out Harry, but still...

I'm sure Ron can get me some inside information...

Chapter 11

November 5

Okay. So I'm going to enlist the help of Ron. I have no other choice. I need to understand what on earth is going through Harry's head. I've known him all this time, yet this year, I don't seem to understand a thing about him, and that scares me. And Parvati is being a complete bitch. Honestly. I don't see what Harry sees in her. She can't even follow simple rules... True, they may or may not exist, but still...

"Hey, you two."

Ron looked up from his game of Wizard's chess, which he was playing with Harry. Harry looked relieved at my interruption, as it seemed, as usual, Harry was dying a horrible death.

"Having fun?" I asked them, suppressing my grin at the sweat that had broken out on Harry's forehead due to his concentration.

"Oh, of course," Harry replied sarcastically with a roll of his eyes. "Loads. I don't even know why I bother anymore. We both know you're going to end up the winner," Harry finished to Ron.

"Because you enjoy the suffering," Ron replied lightly. "Or, rather, I do."

"Very funny," Harry muttered, pushing his hair back as he considered where next to move.

"Right," I interjected, clapping my hands together. "Er, Ron, do you think I could have a word?"

"Again?" Ron asked in surprise.

"Yes, *again*," I replied in an admonishing tone.

“But...” Ron looked sadly at the chessboard, which was dominated by his players. “But I...”

I glared at Ron.

“Can’t this wait?” Ron begged.

“Don’t worry,” Harry smirked. “I promise not to switch around the board.”

Ron sighed. “Fine. Just bloody well fine.”

“Sorry about this, Harry,” I apologized in the direction of my raven-haired friend.

“Oh, not a problem,” Harry said with an extremely please grin. “It’s not as if I needed any of this time to work up a strategy...”

“It won’t do you any good!” Ron called over his shoulder as I dragged him to the Gryffindor common room.

“What’s up now?” Ron asked me in a highly impatient tone.

“How kind of you,” I replied indifferently. “Look, I need you to do me a favor.”

“Favor?” Ron looked highly suspicious. “Look, Hermione, I’m not doing anything for SPEW. I tried the whole badge thing in the beginning, but the house elves just don’t *want* to be— “

“I’m not talking about *S.P.E.W.*,” I retorted acidly. I remembered that I was about to ask Ron for a favor and cleared my throat, putting on a smile. “Sorry. What I mean to say is, Harry has been acting a bit odd again.”

“He was acting odd before?” Ron asked, confused.

“Never mind,” I replied with a wave of my hand. “The point is he’s acting odd. He’s studying when there are no tests, and yesterday, I thought I saw him doing his homework for next week’s class.”

“So?” Ron shrugged. “You’re, what, seven weeks ahead?”

“But Harry’s not me!” I groaned. “Harry is supposed to procrastinate and rely on me to save him at the last minute...not study for no reason and be ahead of his work!”

“Okay, okay!” Ron exclaimed, holding out a hand as if that would prevent me from going insane. “I get it. I’ll talk to Harry and try to find out what’s happening.”

“Thank you so much, Ron!” I squealed in delight, and I flung my arms around a very surprised redhead.

“Er, no problem,” he said, slightly confused, hesitantly patting me on the back.

A second later I pushed back from the hug I had incited, not a smile on my face. “This is very important,” I instructed Ron. “So listen carefully.”

“Okay...”

“Be subtle,” I told him. “Be subtle as if your life depended on it. I *cannot* have Harry thinking anything is up.”

“Subtle?” Ron gave a small laugh. “Me? No problem.”

I stared at Ron for a minute and thought about what he had just said. “On second thought,” I said quickly, “maybe I should get Dean...”

“Hey!” Ron exclaimed, looking insulted. “I can be subtle. Just watch. I’ll be so subtle you won’t know what hit you.”

“I bet I will,” I muttered, as I realized my mistake in entrusting Ron with this job. Ron was one of my closest friends and an extremely sweet person. He had many great qualities – subtlety was *not* one of them.

I followed him back to the common room I shared with Harry, where Harry looked extremely happy. Obviously he had devised what he must have believed was a brilliant plan.

"What did you two talk about?" Harry asked as Ron sat down across from him and I curled up in an armchair to observe their match.

"Oh, nothing..." Ron said with a tone of simplicity Ron was never meant to pull off. "Just stuff." Ron then proceeded to wink at me.

"Did you just wink at Hermione?" Harry asked in surprise.

"No..." Ron replied, as he proceeded to wink at me again. I gave Ron a glare as a warning. This was the lack of subtlety that had worried me.

"Yes you did," Harry insisted. "You just did it again!"

"Speaking of homework," Ron interrupted. "Hermione wants to know what your excuse is for being so ahead of the class."

I watched in horror as Harry's eyes turned their attention from Ron to me. I groaned and placed my face in my palms, not believing what Ron had just done, and curled myself into an even smaller ball.

I heard Ron proclaim happily, "Told you I could be subtle!" It took all of my will power not to jump up and hex him into oblivion. Instead, I did the only thing I could - I ran to my room, not daring to look back, even when I heard Harry call out my name.

All of the Weasley children are dead. On my life, I will kill each and every one of them.

Because apparently they enjoy making my life a living hell.

How could Ron be so...so...so Ron? Okay, that was a bit cruel, I admit, but why oh why do the Weasleys seem to make my life worse?

"Hermione!" I heard Harry call after me. "*Hermione!* For Merlin's sakes!" I closed my door behind me, making sure to lock it, and flung myself under the covers of my bed as I heard Harry near.

“Hermione?” Harry began banging on my door. “Hermione, open up! We need to talk.”

“No!” came my muffled voice.

Harry groaned. “Can you please let me in?”

“No.”

“Are you *naked* in there?” Harry demanded.

“No!” I exclaimed. “I just don’t want you to—”

Harry, who had just proceeded to unlock my door and walk in with his wand at hand, interrupted me.

“Harry!” I exclaimed. “How could you? I had it locked for a reason.”

“You only have it locked because you don’t want to face me,” Harry replied sternly, pocketing his wand.

“I could’ve been naked!” I hissed.

“That’s why I asked,” Harry smiled at me, a tad smugly.

“Oh, get rid of that smile!” I cried out angrily, flinging a pillow at him.

“Whoa!” Harry exclaimed, holding up a hand and catching the pillow with his Quidditch reflexes. “Here.” He tossed the pillow back to me and I placed it gingerly on my bed, as if apologizing for using it so cruelly.

“What’s going on?” Harry asked, walking over to me as I pushed my duvet away from my body and sat on the edge of my bed, my feet swinging on the side.

“Nothing,” I answered stubbornly. Harry gave me a look that clearly said, “Like Hell,” and sat next to me on my bed.

“I’m not an idiot,” he told me. “Though apparently you think I am since you’re so surprised by the fact that I’m studying just for the sake of learning.”

“Harry!” I cried out, hurt by his comment. “Of course I don’t think you’re an idiot. You’re just not one, unless it’s Defense Against the Dark Arts, to study extra for a class, that’s all.”

Harry shrugged. “I guess I just want to learn as much as I can.”

“I don’t want to sound condescending,” I told Harry as I turned my body so I was facing him, tucking my feet beneath me. “But why?”

Harry shrugged again and looked away pointedly. “I...er...I just do.”

“Right,” I replied uncertainly, wanting to interrogate him but knowing that he simply didn’t want to talk about it. I quickly changed the subject. “So...how’s life going?” I asked weakly.

Harry laughed. “Good,” he responded.

“Well,” I corrected immediately.

Harry gave an exasperated sigh. “Sorry. I’m *well*. Is that better, Hermione?”

“Much,” I smiled. “So, go on...life?” I prompted.

“Well, Parvati and I are *well*,” Harry told me. I felt my stomach flip uncomfortably, although I didn’t understand why. After all, I was over Harry and not at all jealous of Parvati.

“That’s...great,” I replied in a pitch that was slightly higher than usual. I cleared my throat. “So you guys really hit it off?”

“Definitely,” Harry smiled. “She’s a lot of fun to be around...although it is hard to get an intelligent conversation out of her.”

“I bet,” I heard myself mutter. Luckily Harry didn’t hear me.

“That’s the great thing about you,” Harry continued. “I enjoy talking with you. I mean, I like talking with Parvati, sure, but with you...I just feel as if we’re always on the same page.”

I felt myself blush and I immediately scolded myself. What reason was there to blush? I quickly turned away so Harry couldn't see my red cheeks.

"Thanks," I said quietly. "I like talking with you, too." I turned back to Harry and found him staring at me, a slight smile on his face. He shook his head and was quickly out of his reverie.

"I've got to go," he apologized. "I have a date with Parvati in two days and I have to plan for it...we're going for a picnic," he explained at my bemused face.

"In the middle of November?" I asked Harry. Was he mental?

"You didn't hear?"

"Hear what?"

"It's supposed to be abnormally warm. One of those odd 22 degree days in the middle of November." Harry's face suddenly lit up. "Why don't you and Terry come along?"

"What?" I asked, taken aback.

"Yeah!" Harry continued fervently. "Like a double date!"

"I don't know," I began, twisting my duvet unconsciously in my fingers.

"Oh, it will be a lot of fun," Harry told me excitedly. "Please?"

How could I say no to such a sweet face? I laughed. "Okay, Harry," I agreed. "I'll tell Terry."

"Excellent," Harry beamed. "Well, I'm off to plan what I'll wear for Parvati."

"This early?" I asked.

"Well, I do want to look nice for her," Harry said happily. "See you!" Harry left my room as I remained on my bed, feeling my heart drop into my stomach.

I simply couldn't understand it. I shouldn't feel so disappointed. I was going to spend a great day with Terry, Harry, and Parvati!

But the thought of Harry and Parvati together...as a couple. It bothered me. And I couldn't make any sense of it.

Frustrated I left my room and headed for the Gryffindor Common Room in search of Ron. I needed to talk to him, even if he had just failed miserably at his last assignment.

To my annoyance, Ron wasn't in the common room, and I checked the boys dorm and couldn't find him there either (I did, however, receive a lot of angry shouts from Dean who said that it was the male's dormitory for a reason...I retorted that I was sure many girls had been up here and he shut up immediately). Disappointed, I flung myself in front of the fireplace as a group of first years passed me, discussing Transfiguration.

The next second, however, I heard a very familiar voice say, "Harry's bringing me on a picnic!"

"Oh wow!" came another familiar voice.

"I *know*! I'm so happy. Think how romantic it will be." The girl sighed and I turned slightly to find Parvati and Lavender, giggling giddily. I felt my stomach lurch at Parvati's words. "Think how romantic it will be." Without realizing what I was doing I walked up to Parvati.

"Hello," I greeted her, a huge smile plastered on my face.

"Oh, hello, Hermione!" Parvati replied happily.

"Er, Parvati," I said uncomfortably, shifting from one foot to the other.

"Yes?" Parvati asked me, her eyebrows scrunched up in confusion.

"I...er...that is to say..." I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to say, and the next moment I spurt out, "You have detention!"

“What!” Parvati exclaimed as Lavender observed me suspiciously. I could just hear Lavender thinking, “I knew she loved him.” “Why?” demanded Parvati.

“Well, that is...” I searched for a reason, and couldn’t find one until my eyes landed upon her mouth, which was chewing gum ferociously. “You’re chewing gum,” I told her matter-of-factly.

“Your point being?”

“Well...” I thought for an explanation. “Well Professor Snape told you in potions a few weeks ago that if he ever caught you chewing gum again he’d put you in detention, and, well...” I gave a pitiful shrug. “I’m really, sorry, but I have no choice.”

“I wasn’t aware that you were Snape, now, Hermione,” Parvati told me darkly.

I laughed nervously. “I’m just following the rules.”

“What rules?” Parvati scoffed. “There’s no rule about chewing gum.”

“Yes there is!” I exclaimed quickly. “In *Hogwarts, a History* it says specifically that all chewing of gum is strictly off bounds.”

“You have *got* to be joking,” Parvati said in disbelief.

“Unfortunately I’m not,” I told her apologetically.

“That is *nota* rule,” Parvati fired back.

“When was the last time *you* read *Hogwarts, a History*?” I snapped at her. Parvati remained silent. “Professor Snape will be expecting you,” I told her lightly, and I turned on my heel and headed for the Owlery, so that I could send a letter to Snape explaining why he would have an extra guest tomorrow evening.

Then I thought about how I needed to tell Terry about the picnic idea of Harry’s. However, I found that I didn’t even want to look at him.

Was that a bad sign?

Okay, I know that Ginny tried to help me, but I must admit, the Terry thing...well...it's beginning to get old.

The only good thing is that I'm definitely over Harry! And not at all jealous of Parvati. Nope. Not at all.

And as long as I repeat that to myself, there's no way I will ever confess to still liking him.

Nope. Not at all. Nope. Not at all. Nope. Not at all.

It's working out wonderfully.

Chapter 12

November 6

I cannot believe this. I, Hermione Jane Granger, received detention today. Yes. You read correctly. Detention. And why exactly did I receive a detention?

Well, you can ask Harry for that answer. If he hadn't gone insane in class today, I wouldn't have gotten, and I wouldn't be stuck in a detention with Parvati, Harry, and Terry.

What on earth was he trying to prove anyway? And since when does Harry raise his hand in class?

I am angered beyond words. Detention. Me. I mean, the two don't even add up. It's unheard of. It's almost a taboo.

It is a taboo...or rather a broken taboo.

We filed into NEWTs potions class and sat in our regular seats, as Snape would kill us if we ever switched. Ron and Harry sat next to one another and I had the desk next to them, which I coincidentally shared with Terry, as he had sat next to me on the first day of the year. Parvati was oddly absent, and I figured she was probably still upset with me over yesterday's events.

I smiled at Terry and he gave me a short kiss, which I returned. Then I took out my materials that I'd need and prepared myself for class.

Snape entered the room, the door slamming behind him, and walked briskly over to the chalkboard, his cape billowing behind him. He tapped the chalkboard twice, and the name of a reptile appeared on the board.

"Ashwinder," Snape said to the class. "Can anyone tell me what this is?"

I raised my hand immediately.

“Anyone?” Snape repeated, ignoring me completely. However, I grit my teeth and raised my hand higher, containing the urge to shout out the answer. To my complete amazement, someone to the right of me raised his hand...a certain best friend with raven hair.

I stared as Harry looked determinedly at Snape. With my peripheral vision I saw that Terry’s head had snapped at Harry raising his hand. Everyone knew how much he despised potions, myself included. Ron was gaping at Harry as if he had gone mental, and I honestly didn’t blame Ron for the expression on his face.

Snape looked completely surprised by Harry’s raised hand. However, his lips slowly curved into a smirk, and he said to Harry, “Well Mr. Potter. Let’s see you fail this question, shall we? Why don’t I just take away the points from Gryffindor now?” Ron made a movement to tackle Snape, but Harry nudged him in the side. “So, Mr. Potter. Tell me. What is an Ashwinder?”

“An Ashwinder is a thin, pale grey serpent, with glowing red eyes. It is created when a magical fire is allowed to burn unchecked for too long. The Ashwinder will rise from the embers of the fire and slither away into the shadows, leaving an ashy trail.

“The Ashwinder has a very short life span, approximately one hour. During its short life, it seeks a dark and secluded spot to lay eggs. Once the eggs are laid, the Ashwinder will collapse into dust.”

I stared at Harry in utter amazement. That was exactly what I was going to say, as Harry has just recited the textbook exactly. Since when did Harry recite textbooks?

However, I found myself muttering, “Impressive.”

“What?” Terry asked immediately.

“Well, you must admit,” I told him, “Harry knowing an Ashwinder as well as I do...not to sound conceited, but it’s impressive.”

Terry muttered something unhappily under his breath while Harry, who had heard what I said, beamed at me.

Snape looked as if life as he knew it had ended. However, he composed himself and snapped, "We don't need another know-it-all busybody in this classroom, Potter. That's what Granger's for." I could see Harry and Ron's hands clench into fists. "Try learning the information instead of simply reciting it."

Snape walked back to the board and asked, "Can anyone care to tell me about the Ashwinder's eggs?" My hand went up once more, as did Harry's and, to my surprise, Terry's. Now, Terry was a wonderful student, brilliant even (he was a Ravenclaw), but he was usually always quiet in potions.

Has the world gone mad? I found myself thinking.

Snape chose to ignore both of them. "Is this class so dimwitted that no one knows the answer to such a simple question?"

"An Ashwinder's eggs are brilliant red and give off an intense amount of heat!" Harry shouted, standing up.

Terry glared at Harry and left his seat as well. "They will ignite the area they're in within minutes if not found!" he shouted, turning towards Harry. Harry in turn spun around to face Terry, a look on his face that I could only imagine was one he gave Voldemort on numerous occasions.

"If found, they must be frozen with a freezing charm!"

"Frozen Ashwinder eggs have a high market price!"

"Shut up!" roared Snape, but Terry and Harry ignored him as I continued to strain my arm by raising it higher, lifting myself slightly off my seat. "Hand down, Granger!" Snape snapped at me, but I didn't comply.

"They're a main ingredient in love potions!" Harry fired at Terry.

“No they’re not,” barked Terry. “They’re eaten whole as a cure for ague!”

“They are *not*!” Harry retorted. “It says specifically in the NEWTs potion book that— ”

“That they’re eaten whole as a cure for ague!” sniped Terry.

I couldn’t stand it any longer. Not only was the arguing making my head pound, but I wasn’t being allowed to answer the question.

“SHUT UP!” I cried, jumping up. “The both of you!” Terry and Harry both stared at me, clearly affronted by my outburst at them. “It’s used for both you insufferable...you...argh!” I cried, not able to contain my anger. It was unusual for me to yell like this, but they were acting so odd. I just couldn’t *stand* it any longer. “For Merlin’s sake! If you just read the book properly, you’d know that!” I breathed heavily as the classroom became scarily quiet.

Then, from out of the silence came Snape’s very happy voice. “Detention,” he hissed. “Potter, Boot, Granger. Tonight. Seven o’clock. And thirty points from each of you! Now sit down before I put you in detention for the rest of the week.”

The three of us slumped into our chairs as the rest of the class stared at us. I found myself blushing horribly. I could just hear it now. Hermione Granger. In detention. I hadn’t had detention since first year, and that was because Harry and I had to save Norbert, or rather Hagrid.

How did my life get so complicated?

Oh my God. I am dead. Absolutely dead. We’re in detention right now, and I forgot, although writing about it previously, that Parvati would be here, too. I also conveniently forgot that Harry didn’t know I had assigned Parvati a detention...

And now I think he may be a bit upset with me... But honestly! He’s just acting strange. He’s read Hogwarts, a History. Yes, Hogwarts, a

History! I'm the only person since the author wrote it that has read that book! Why on earth did he read it?

I'm also upset because the fact that he read it meant I was in big trouble...major trouble, truth be told.

"I can't believe I'm in detention," I moaned, banging my head lightly against the table. "I'm Head Girl, and I'm in detention! What an awful role model I must be!"

"I'm Head Boy, and *I'm* in detention," Harry, who was sitting at the table two rows in front of me, called back to me.

I sighed. "Yes, Harry, but you've gotten detention before. I simply don't receive detentions. I'm the *good* student!"

"Try lucky," Harry joked, turning around. *He* was lucky Snape was in his office. He had said that he couldn't stand staying in the same room as all of us and had assigned us to cut up ingredients for hours on end for his stock as our punishment. I grabbed a knife and began chopping carefully, remembering what had happened to Ron in our third year when he chopped unevenly.

As I violently came down on one ingredient, I realized what Harry had said. "What do you mean *lucky*?" I questioned him, putting my knife down and wiping my hands on the cloth next to me.

"Hermione, think about how many times you've broken the rules," Harry said with a knowing look. "I mean you've gone into the kitchens a numerous amount of times, gone off grounds, helped me with the Triwizard Tournament, made polyjuice in our second year, smuggled a dragon with me in first, led our DADA teacher to her possible death in fifth, convinced me to start an illegal defense club, not to mention all the adventures we went on."

I stayed silent for a moment, and then replied, in a slightly hurt voice, "I did that all for you."

I heard Terry choke on air, and I turned around quickly. "Are you okay?"

"Oh, just swell," he replied darkly, glowering at Harry. If I hadn't known any better, I would've sworn he was jealous.

Or maybe he *was* jealous? But I didn't have time to worry about that now, as Harry was speaking again.

"I know you did Hermione," he said kindly. "And I'm not saying that I wish you hadn't done any of those things, because I think it was amazingly brave and brilliant of you to do so." I blushed deeply at his compliment. "All I'm saying is that you're one lucky witch."

"Don't you mean bitch?" an angry voice asked us. I turned around to find a fuming Parvati enter the dungeon.

"Parvati!" I exclaimed in an unnaturally high voice. "Fancy seeing you here."

"Oh yes, fancy indeed," Parvati remarked, eyeing me furiously.

"What on earth is going on?" Harry exclaimed. "Parvati, why are you here?"

"You can thank your co Head for that," Parvati told him coldly.

"What?" Harry looked utterly lost. "What did she do?"

"Oh, nothing except put me in detention for *chewing gum*."

Harry rounded on me immediately.

"You put her in detention for chewing gum?" he asked me quietly.

"Well, you see..." I trailed off.

"Why?" Harry demanded.

"Oh, didn't you know?" Parvati answered in a mocking tone. "According to *Hogwarts, A History*, it's against school rules to chew gum."

Harry turned to look at me once more, a look on his face that clearly said, "I don't believe you."

"Can we go talk over in that corner?" Harry asked me, not as warm as usual. "So we'll have a bit of privacy."

"Privacy, right!" commented Terry with a sharp laugh.

"What's a matter Boot?" Harry turned to face Terry, already angry with him. "Jealous?"

"Don't you get started on that, Potter," Terry growled. "You know fully well that—"

"Stop it!" I cried, walking in between the two of them and holding up my hands to prevent them from pummeling one another to death. "Terry," I told my boyfriend gently, "there's no need to worry. Harry is my *friend*."

Ha! a voice exclaimed. *Friend, indeed.* I began to panic internally. The voice was back. After being dormant for so long, that voice that had convinced me of my feelings for Harry was back. I shut my eyes tightly. *Go away,* I moaned to myself. *Go away, go away, go away!*

"Are you alright?" Harry's concerned voice interrupted my inner argument. My eyes fluttered open.

"Oh, yes," I replied weakly.

"Good," Harry replied. "Let's go talk now."

I took in a sharp intake of breath, but followed Harry to the corner, playing with my fingers nervously.

"What do you think you're playing at?" Harry asked me. For the record, he wasn't yelling at me, as I expected, but instead simply asking me, though obviously a bit annoyed.

"She broke the rules," I shrugged. "You heard Snape in potions class a few weeks back. No chewing gum. Plus, *Hogwarts, a History* says—"

“Absolutely nothing on the subject!” Harry interrupted me.

“How would you know?” I asked Harry.

“Because I’ve *read* the book, Hermione,” Harry retorted.

“You what?” I gasped.

“Yes. I, Harry James Potter, read a book! Don’t look so surprised.” Harry shook his head, clearly trying to shake away his anger.

“Not just any book, Harry,” I said in a whisper. “No one else has ever read that book. Why did you read it?”

Harry didn’t catch my eye. “Er, well, you’re always going on about how we never read it and it annoys you, and you’ve read it so many times...I figured I might as well.”

“You read it because of me?” I said softly.

Harry shrugged, still not looking at me. “I suppose.” He cleared his throat and turned his eyes back on me. “But that’s not the point.”

“Right,” I replied, my eyes now downcast.

“The point is...why did you put Parvati in detention?”

“I don’t know!” I cried out despairingly. “I just...was really stressed out, and I took it out on her,” I said quickly.

“You took it out on her?” Harry repeated.

“Yes.”

“A little strange that you took it out on my girlfriend, isn’t it?” Harry replied, his lips slowly turning into a smile.

I gave a short laugh. “You’re one to talk, Mr. Fight With My Boyfriend All the Time.”

“I do not!” Harry replied sharply.

“Oh, come *on*, Harry,” I laughed at him. “Potions? There was more tension in there than between you and Malfoy! What’s going on?”

“He just annoys me, that’s all,” Harry muttered.

“You seemed to like him before he was my boyfriend,” I commented casually.

Harry rolled his eyes. “It’s just what you said before. I’m not used to you having a boyfriend. And I’m too overprotective for my own good. You said so yourself.”

“Oh,” I said softly, finding myself slightly disappointed in his answer. “Right.”

Suddenly a voice rang out, “Potter! Granger!” I gulped as I turned around and found Snape towering over us.

“Pro-professor!” I exclaimed weakly.

“What exactly do you two think you’re doing?” he hissed. “Having a nice little snog, are we?”

I blushed furiously while Harry glared at him.

“Get back to work,” he barked. “Detention isn’t socializing hour.” He walked up to his desk and sat down, now lording over our work. Harry and I gave each other a look, sighed, and returned to our tables and chopping.

But while I was chopping, I found myself constantly looking up to stare at the back of Harry’s head, only to have Snape’s glare force me to quickly look down, not to mention Terry’s constant suspicious side glances at me.

Could it possibly be that Ginny was right and I still loved Harry? Suddenly all those things about Parvati seemed absolutely ridiculous. Ginny was right – they were all excuses not to like Parvati.

I still love him, I thought softly to myself, as I gathered some perfectly chopped up ingredients and stored them in a jar. *I still love him...*

And to my utter amazement, I found a lone tear running down my cheek.

“What’s wrong?” Terry asked me immediately, who had been watching me for any signs of staring at Harry.

“Nothing,” I told him softly, lacking any energy. “It made me tear, that’s all.” I indicated to the jar full of my cut up ingredients and gave Terry a weak smile. He nodded his head shortly and returned to his own cutting.

I put my knife down and wiped away the tear, uncharacteristically sniffing softly. I was with Terry and Harry was with Parvati.

Better yet, we were scheduled to go on a double date tomorrow.

What was I to do now?

Information on the Ashwinder from the Harry Potter Lexicon and mythicalcreatures2 (tripod site...FF is being annoying and not letting me put the whole links, lol)...

Chapter 13

November 7,

Today must have been the worst day of my life. I swear, it really was – yes, that does mean worse than when I was almost murdered in the Department of Mysteries. That's how terribly awful (yes, I realize that was horribly redundant of me, but let us forget proper grammar now, shall we?) my day was.

I should have known it was going to be a disaster the moment I woke up with that intensely painful headache, or at the very least when I saw the look on Terry's face when he discovered that we were going on a double date with Harry and Parvati.

Honestly, if looks could kill...well, then again, Harry and Ron would have been dead the first time they tried to copy my homework in first year.

I woke up Saturday morning extremely early and, unsurprisingly, cranky. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not one to sleep in, even on a Saturday, but waking up at six AM on a day with no classes is no picnic for anyone – even me. I normally sleep until eight, once in a while taking the luxury to sleep in until nine, but thanks to the throbbing pain behind my eyes, I didn't get such a chance today.

I groaned as I opened my eyes and the sunlight hit me square in the eye, causing me to flinch in pain and experience a wave of nausea. At that moment I knew that one of two events had occurred: either I had gotten drunk last night and I was experiencing a hangover, or I was now a victim of a severe migraine thanks to the stress I had experienced lately. Knowing fully well that the most alcoholic beverage I had ever drunk in my life was Butterbeer, I decided that the latter was the case and closed my eyes tight in an attempt to block out the light.

I blindly reached for my curtains and tried to sit up at the same time, only to fall out of my bed and land on the floor. I thankfully landed on

my bottom, but that didn't make the jolt cause me any less excruciating pain to my head.

"Bugger," I muttered angrily as I stood up. I realized that I needed to get dressed, and I couldn't do so with my eyes closed. I sighed sadly and cautiously opened both eyes. I was hit with another wave of pain and had to steady myself by taking hold of my night table as I felt the room spin.

"This is unfair," I moaned to myself. "Absolutely unfair. It's enough I have to go through what I am, but to top it all off with a bloody migraine?" I decided to simply squint my eyes, and although it didn't shut the sun out completely, at least I could get dressed without too much pain.

I stumbled over to my closet and found my uniform (I was not in any mood to plan an outfit, even if I did have a picnic to go to later on) and dressed as quickly as I could given the circumstances.

After pulling on some loafers I shuffled my way downstairs where I was greeted by an empty common room. I continued down the stairs that led to the Gryffindor common room, to find it as silent as the one I had just left. I exited the Gryffindor Tower and headed in the direction of the Hospital Wing at the fastest pace I could manage. Needless to say it was a good amount of time before I reached the Hospital Wing's doors.

Not bothering to knock, as I normally would have done, I decided to barge in on a very surprised Madam Pomfrey.

"Miss Granger!" she exclaimed, looking up from a student she was tending who looked as if they were unconscious. "What is going on?"

"Migraine," I croaked. "Potion. Now."

Madam Pomfrey took one look at my state and tsked. "I thought someone as sensible as you would know not to drink," she scolded, narrowing her eyes at me.

I gritted my teeth and clenched my fists in an attempt to not attack her.

“Do you honestly think that I would compromise my academic career for something so frivolous?” I demanded of her. I realized how rude I must have sounded and took a deep breath in an attempt to calm myself down. “I’m sorry,” I apologized to a very offended looking Madam Pomfrey. “I’m just under so much stress. That’s what brought on the migraine you see.” I massaged my temples as they began to throb again. “Do you have anything that could make this thing disappear?” I begged her.

Madam Pomfrey sighed. “I should’ve known you would crack one day from the stress. Wait one second dear, and lie down.”

I didn’t bother to correct her (after all, I hadn’t really cracked, at least not yet), and did as she instructed me.

Madam Pomfrey returned with a steaming potion. She handed it to me and I gulped it down, anxious to rid myself of all pain. I immediately regretted such a choice as the potion tasted like horseradish, a taste I have not yet acquired, and doubt that I ever will. However, I choked it down and immediately the headache disappeared.

“Thank you very much!” I told her, hopping up, only to be stopped by her hand.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Madam Pomfrey asked me, raising an eyebrow.

“I was thinking of heading off to breakfast,” I replied, confused by her question.

“Over my dead body,” Madam Pomfrey said, narrowing her eyes at me. “You’re staying here for the rest of the day. You’re obviously very stressed. I want to look after you.”

My eyes widened at her words. *That great control freak is going to ruin my day!* I moaned to myself. I controlled myself, once again, from attacking her and said as calmly as possible, “Please don’t worry about me. I’m going on a picnic with some friends today. I’ll be perfectly fine. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to have some breakfast.”

And before she could respond that she did indeed mind, as I knew fully well that she would, I jetted off and didn't slow down until I was safely seated at the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall.

I checked my watch, which said that it was a quarter after seven (Madam Pomfrey really does keep her patients waiting too long). I sighed as I looked around and realized that I was alone, and I most likely would stay alone for about half an hour.

Sighing at this realization, I poured myself a cup of coffee (I deserved some caffeine) and placed two pieces of toast on my place. I still have guilt trips sometimes for eating so much when I think about those poor enslaved house elves, as I was now. I often felt guilty for eating at all, but realized that if I didn't eat, who would be left to free them? Only this kept my appetite from disappearing.

As I nibbled on my toast and thought about the events of yesterday (I had a feeling that the little war that had started between Parvati and myself was *not* over), I saw, to my great surprise, Terry enter the Great Hall, not looking too well himself (although a right side better than I must have when I woke up this morning. At least *he* appeared sober).

He noticed me and gave me a small smile before joining me at my table. Surprised by this action, I immediately pointed out that this wasn't his table.

"Well, seeing as you're the only one up, I figured it would be okay," Terry replied, slightly coldly as he grabbed the pitcher full of orange juice. He raised an eyebrow at me. "You don't object, do you?"

"No, of course not!" I answered quickly, slightly offended by his accusation. "I'm just not used to you eating here, that's all."

"We should eat together more often," Terry replied with a slight frown. "We've been eating at different tables. We're a couple. We have the right to eat at one another's tables. Anyway, our houses aren't enemies. It's not like you're dating Malfoy."

“Oh Merlin,” I said, flinching at his last comment and dropping my toast immediately, sick with the thought of dating such a horrible person. “That’s just disgusting of you to even mention.”

Terry laughed, losing his cold tone and replacing it with a much warmer one. “Yes, I suppose it was. But you’re dating me, so nothing to worry about, right?”

“Right,” I answered, slightly uncertainly, though not enough that he noticed. Terry grinned at me and kissed me on the lips.

“Now,” he said as he grabbed some eggs and placed them on his plate, next to his orange (men have very weird combinations when it comes to food – eggs and an orange...honestly), “What shall we do? It’s a gorgeous day – 22 degrees I hear (and in November no less!) – and we shouldn’t waste it inside studying.”

“Of course not,” I replied lightly, buttering my toast. “We should study *outside*.” I gave Terry a side-glance and smirked. Terry laughed.

“No, seriously,” he replied. “What do you say we spend the day together?”

“Well,” I said slowly, placing my toast and knife down, trying to figure out how to tell Terry that we were already set for a double date with none other than Harry. “I was thinking that we could, er, go on a picnic?” I gave a nervous laugh as I purposely left out the part where Harry and Parvati would tag along – or rather where we would tag along with Harry and Parvati.

Terry looked positively radiant at my suggestion. “That’s a wonderful idea!” he exclaimed. “When?”

Harry told me last night, after detention, that we would meet at the gates outside Hogsmeade around 12, and so I told Terry exactly that. Leaving out the Harry bit of course.

Terry grinned at me happily. “This will be great,” he smiled. “I can’t wait!” He looked at his watch, got up, gave me a short kiss, and told me that he was going to brush up on his studies before the date. I knew I should have done exactly that too, but I had just noticed that

Harry had walked in (with Parvati clinging to his arm and glaring suspiciously at me), and realized that there was too much of a pull to stay here. I quickly brushed Terry off by telling him that I'd meet him outside Hogwarts at ten of 12. Terry nodded his head in understanding and left, luckily ignoring how distant I had become at the arrival of Harry.

Parvati and Harry arrived at the table. Parvati had obviously been trying to sit between us, as when Harry rushed ahead of her to sit next to me she looked extremely pained. She sat down, however, although rather huffily.

"Hi Harry," I told him, smiling brightly at him. I purposely ignored Parvati as I figured it would do nothing to improve my relationship with her by acknowledging her. I took a sip from my coffee mug.

"Hey," he replied, returning the smile so that his green eyes lit up. "Just got up?"

I gave a short, almost barking, laugh. "I wish," I told him, fiddling with the handle on my mug. "Sadly I got a wake up call at six AM, thanks to a wonderful migraine, and I had to get a potion from Madam Pomfrey. I couldn't get back to sleep so I came down here around seven and ate."

"Are you okay?" Harry asked me immediately, placing his hand on top of mine in concern. "You're not sick or anything, right?"

I smiled at his gesture (the smile was actually hiding what I was truly feeling – a tingle throughout my entire body) and reassured him that I wasn't going to die. I gave his hand a slight squeeze, and he squeezed back.

Only he didn't let go.

And neither did I.

So we sat there, squeezing one another's hand, and smiling.

It wasn't until Parvati gave a little, "Hem, hem," and nudged Harry with her elbow that we quickly let go, looking away, pretending to be embarrassed.

I heard Parvati hiss, "What was that about?" while Harry hurriedly tried to explain that he was just worried that I was overworking myself like I did in our third year. Parvati didn't accept this explanation, and even though Harry apologized for it (I tensed at his apology – was he really sorry?), Parvati left the table, proclaiming that she was going to spend some time with Lavender and that she'd meet him for their picnic later.

"Sorry about that," I said quietly as I picked at the crust of my now cold, not to mention soggy, toast.

"It's not your fault," Harry sighed, picking glumly at an orange. "She just doesn't understand the type of relationship we have."

I kept quiet, and as I didn't respond to his comment, Harry continued.

"I had the same issue with Cho," Harry told me, shaking his head. "Of course, you know all about that. She thought that we were secretly dating on the outside or something. Seems Parvati thinks the same thing." Harry gave a small laugh. "Insane, huh?"

"Yeah," I echoed softly. "Insane."

"I wish she would understand that we're just really close friends. I mean the three of us have been best friends since we were eleven. We're bound to be close, even two people of the opposite sex."

"Uh huh," I said, looking away and staring out into the distance in an effort not to shout out that I most definitely did not feel that our closeness was simply platonic.

Harry sighed. "Oh well. Guess I better try to make it up to Parvati. I'll see you later, okay?"

I nodded at Harry silently as he left the table. I was only left alone for a moment, as floods of students suddenly entered the Great Hall. Looking at my watch I realized that it was nine AM, the prime

breakfast hour. I didn't much feel like being around my fellow students, so I left the table just as Ginny sat down, deciding that I would study for a few hours.

The sad part about it all is that was just the morning of my day from Hell.

Yes, it got worse.

The studying part was fine. The date part... Well, "was not" would be an understatement, to say the very least.

I had ended up interrupting my studies to take a nap (after all, I had lost two hours of sleep), and awoke to realize that it was ten to twelve.

"Bugger," I muttered to no one in particular. I jumped up and ran all the way until I reached the outside doors of Hogwarts. By the time I found Terry I was panting for breath.

"So-so sorry!" I exclaimed, clutching at a stitch that had developed during my sprint. "I took...took a-a nap and I overslept and...and...I'm sorry!" My explanation was interrupted many times by my constant need to gulp air.

"No need," Terry told me gently. "It happens. Can you breathe?" he asked me.

"Ye-yeah," I replied with a reassuring smile. "Just no more running for me." I laughed good-naturedly as I straightened up and we set out for the gates to Hogsmeade. As we drew closer I felt my throat constrict and realized I was having trouble breathing, and it has *nothing* to do with cardiovascular activities. This would be the moment where Terry discovered that we were actually going on a double date, and I had a feeling he wouldn't be too happy with me.

I saw Terry give me a skeptical look as we finally reached the gates and Harry and Parvati were waiting for us.

I heard Parvati demanding impatiently of Harry, “What on *earth* are we waiting for?”

Before Harry could respond he noticed us and shouted, “Hi Hermione! Terry!” waving as if we were a mile away when in fact we were merely ten feet.

Parvati swiveled around; her eyes narrowed at us – or rather at me.

She turned quickly back to Harry and she whispered, although not softly enough as I could hear her loud and clear, “*She’s* coming with us?” Not they. She.

As Harry tried to explain to a slowly reddening Parvati, Terry turned to me and asked me the same question, only, of course, with a he.

“Well,” I told him, feeling horribly guilty, “Yes.” Terry looked ready to explode and I rushed to explain. “You see, Harry asked me two days ago if we’d like to go on a double date picnic, and I figured that we would, er, have a wonderful time! I know I should’ve told you!” I continued, wringing my hands nervously as Terry glared at me, “But I thought you would react badly, seeing as what had happened between the two of you, especially after last night, and I wanted you to give Harry a second chance and realize that we’re just...just friends.” I said the last part extremely quickly, not wanting to admit it myself. Whether Terry noticed or not, I couldn’t tell, for he simply sighed, shook his head, almost in disbelief, and reassured me that it would be okay.

I turned to see how Harry was dealing with Parvati, and saw, to my relief, that her face had returned to a normal color. She gave me a smile, although her eyes remained the exact opposite of friendly.

“Well,” she said briskly. “Let’s get a move on, shall we?” Harry bent over to pick up two baskets and I quickly offered my service and took one myself. The four of us walked silently throughout most of Hogsmeade until we reached a patch of grass (which was hard to find due to the fact that it was, despite the warm weather, winter) that had a nice view of the shrieking shack.

I gave Harry a knowing smile as I helped him set up the picnic (both Terry and Parvati, although they seemed to have forgiven us, were still angry and had refused to help – although they still kept surveillance over us at all times while it was just the Harry and me together, as if we were about to snog each other). I pointed to the shack with my eyes and Harry turned around to look at the building that harbored so many memories. He turned back and chuckled.

“Quite an adventure we had, wasn’t it?” he told me quietly so that Terry and Parvati couldn’t hear us.

“Quite,” I responded, smoothing out the blanket that we would all sit on as Harry set out the food. I laughed as I thought about that night three and a half years ago.

“What?” Harry asked me inquiringly.

“Just remembering how we all cursed Snape is all,” I told Harry, and he laughed too.

“That was brilliant,” Harry beamed. “Of course you had to ruin the moment with your, ‘We attacked a teacher!’ exclamation and complimentary nervous dance.”

“Hey!” I replied, playfully slapping him on the arm as if I was offended. “It’s against the rules to attack a teacher, and the fact that all three of us had...” I trailed off.

“You’ll always be rule abiding, huh Hermione?” Harry grinned. “You deserve a plaque. Miss Hermione Granger – award for the most rule abiding student at Hogwarts.”

“Not always,” I said softly. “I never paused to think about breaking a rule if it concerned your welfare.” I looked up at Harry and saw that he was staring at me, his hand, which had been reaching for a bunch of plates, frozen in midair.

I blushed and looked away quickly and helped Harry finish unpacking, feeling the cold glares of Parvati and Terry (*Your boyfriend!* I reminded myself sternly. *Terry. Not Harry*) on our backs.

“We’re ready!” I called to the two, who had quickly begun talking when they realized that we had turned to face them again (after all, they didn’t *want* us to know that they were spying on us).

“How lovely,” Parvati smiled, which was clearly forced, as she walked over, along with Terry, to the blanket. She sat down next to Harry and wrapped her arm possessively around his waist. Terry copied Parvati’s movement, and I found myself squashed up against his body.

Harry and I exchanged looks and couldn’t help but roll our eyes. We both knew our respective boyfriend and girlfriend was way past being jealous.

They had become, for lack of better words, absolutely neurotic, probably believing that Harry and I were shagging late at night.

Yes, yes, I know the date doesn’t sound so bad. I mean, sure, Parvati and Terry were being rather annoying, what with their distrust (where’s the basis of a relationship if there’s no trust?), but Harry and I were having a rather good time.

Weird, isn’t it? Harry and I were having a good time with one another...just not with our dates.

Anyway, that wasn’t the bad part. No, the bad part came later, after we finished our lunch (I learned that Harry had acquired the food from the house elves. Of course, this bothered me a bit, but he reassured me that Dobby had done it all for him, and seeing as Dobby gets paid and has days off, I found myself okay with the situation). You see, Parvati insisted that she and Harry walk a few feet off to look at the Shrieking Shack (not get anywhere near it mind you – Parvati doesn’t have enough courage for something like that), and Terry and I were left on our own...

“Alone at last,” Terry smiled, a smile playing on his lips.

“You’re not enjoying this?” I asked him, realizing I really didn’t care if he was anyway. I was too concerned with the way Parvati was trying to interlace her fingers with Harry’s.

“No,” Terry replied, clearly not telling me the truth. “I’m just glad to have some time with just you.” To my great surprise he leaned over me so that his body was on top of mine and began kissing me.

Now, of course, we had kissed before, but being the prude I am, that was the most we had done. Imagine my surprise when I found that his tongue had somehow found his way into my mouth.

I was so astonished that I had no idea how to act. I was in shock. Yes, we had been dating for nearly a month now, yes, I was seventeen and I honestly should’ve been doing this at least two years ago, and yes, I realized most couples had gotten to the making out stage by now, if not further. But must I remind you that I’m Hermione Granger? Love is not my department – nor is going anywhere in love.

So you can just *continue* to imagine the look upon my face as I felt my blouse lift up and a hand place itself on my stomach – on my *flesh*.

My eyes opened quickly, but I was still too overwhelmed to do anything about the situation.

I was debating with myself whether or not to find a way to snap myself out of it and stop Terry when he got to the stage where his hand made his way higher and higher. After all, we were making out, in *public* no less.

Before I could do anything, however, Terry had been ripped off of me. I stayed on the ground, unable to move, as if petrified by what had just taken place. It wasn’t until I heard Parvati scream, “Harry! No!” that I quickly stood up, only to find that Terry was pushed up against a tree, while none other than Harry held him by his neck.

I rushed over to the said tree, horrified by this turn of events.

As I arrived at the scene I heard Harry threaten Terry: “If you *ever* touch her like that again, I swear that I will hex you off the face of this earth.”

"She's my *girlfriend*!" Terry sputtered.

Harry's emerald eyes, which were usually dancing with life, were now full of anger. It was as if a fire had been lit behind them.

"I don't care," Harry hissed. "That doesn't give you a right to treat her body as your personal snogging machine."

"Harry," I said gently, knowing that yelling at him would do nothing, and placing a hand on his arm. "Harry, let him go. He didn't do anything wrong."

"He didn't even bother to see that you didn't *want* to snog him!" Harry yelled angrily, tightening his hold on Terry. I heard Parvati squeal.

"Harry," I continued, "just let him go. All right? You're not solving anything. Just let him go."

Harry mumbled something under his breath that sounded a lot like, "Miserable old bastard," but stepped away nonetheless, allowing Terry to slide down the tree. Harry turned to me and muttered an apology.

I found myself unable to respond. On one hand, I was annoyed that Harry didn't think that as a fully-grown witch I could care for myself, and also there was the fact that he had almost killed my boyfriend. On the other, I knew that if Harry hadn't stopped Terry, I surely wouldn't have, and the fact that Harry had noticed that I wanted Terry to stop meant something to me.

Instead I decided to help Terry up, who was rubbing at his neck. He looked up and to my disbelief glared at me, tearing his hand away from my grasp. He shook his head in anger and turned away from me, walking quickly down the road that winded through Hogsmeade and back towards Hogwarts.

Deciding that Harry and Parvati could clean up the picnic themselves I ran after Terry. Luckily I was in much better shape than him, thanks to all of the adventures with Harry and Ron, and I reached him in no time.

"What is your problem?" I demanded of him, twirling him around by the shoulder so that he faced me. "That wasn't my doing you know!"

"Well you didn't exactly blow up at him for it, did you?" Terry replied coldly. "For Merlin's sake, Hermione! You comforted him! The man who *attacked* me. Your boyfriend. For trying to make *out* with you. We've gone out for a bloody month, Hermione, and it's illegal for us to snog?" Terry gave a sharp laugh. "He even accused me of snogging you when you didn't want to!"

I stayed silent, not sure how to respond. Terry's eyes widened as he realized the truth.

"You didn't want to?" he whispered.

"N-no," I said softly, unable to look him in the eye. "No."

"But we've gone out for a *month*, Hermione, a *month*. There are couples out there who are.... I mean, if we can't even *snog*, if *you* don't even want to snog, that doesn't say much about us as a couple, does it?"

I didn't reply but let Terry continue ranting.

"And you seem much more happier spending time with Harry than me! I mean, all of those little smiles you give each other, the hand holding..."

"We're just friends," I said hoarsely.

"Well it bothers me," Terry said tersely. "And I'm not a fool Hermione."

"What are you talking about?" I asked him, blinking in confusion.

"I know that I can't date you so long as you're with Harry," Terry informed me briskly, as if we were dealing with business instead of our relationship, "but I also know that if forced to choose between us, you wouldn't need a moment's notice. Your choice would be him."

"Are we breaking up?" I asked quietly, not refuting what he had said. It was, after all, completely true.

Terry sighed. "It was...fun...while it lasted," he told me. "But we were obviously not meant for each other. Sure, we had our laughs, but it's clear that I'm not the guy for you." After giving me a significant look, Terry turned away, calling, "Goodbye, Hermione!" leaving me all alone in the middle of Hogsmeade, and surprisingly not at all hurt by the break up.

However, I was not left on my own for long. A girl rushed by me, sobbing hysterically while tears gushed from her eyes and down her red face. Although I only caught a glimpse of her, I knew that the girl was Parvati. Turning around I saw Harry walking down the road, carrying the baskets and looking rather depressed. I ran up to meet him.

"What happened?" I asked him softly, taking a basket from him as I had earlier today.

"I think we broke up," he sighed.

"Why?" I exclaimed, trying to hide my joy at the news.

"Well," said Harry, running his fingers through his hair, "after you ran after Terry she started yelling at me, accusing me of caring more about you than her. Then she told me that I had a choice: you or her, because she wasn't going to stay so long as you were around. The idiot," Harry shook his head. "As if I wouldn't choose you."

I felt a lump in my throat, and I knew that it wasn't because I was upset. I was happy. I was so happy that I thought I was going to cry.

"Just like that?" I asked Harry, staring up at him in disbelief. "Me?"

Harry shrugged. "Of course. We've been best friends for six years. Some girl isn't going to come between us."

"And is it true?" I said, so softly that I feared he couldn't hear me.

"Is what true?" Harry asked in confusion.

"That you care more about me?" I waited for his answer in bated breath. However, I discovered it was not one that I wanted.

"Of course," Harry laughed. "Didn't I just tell you? We're best friends. You'll always mean more to me than some girl." The last part made me fill up with happiness I never knew existed. But then Harry continued, the second part almost hesitantly, although it did nothing to reduce the pain it caused me. "Just like Ron will."

Just like Ron will. The words stung, but I quickly made myself ignore it.

"Well, I'm sorry," I told Harry. "It's all my fault, I suppose. After all, I'm the reason why Parvati broke up with you."

"Don't blame yourself!" Harry said immediately. "It wasn't your fault."

"I suppose," I replied. "And after all, I guess this makes us even."

"What?" Harry looked utterly confused at my last comment.

"Well, you see, Terry broke up with me."

"He *what*?"

"Yes," I reaffirmed for Harry. "Only thing is he was a lot smarter than Parvati. He told me that he knew he couldn't continue going out with me so long as you and I were still friends, but he also knew that I would choose you over him. So he broke up with me."

"I'm so sorry!" Harry exclaimed. "I shouldn't have overreacted all those times, and—"

"It's fine," I told Harry gently. "Just like you told me – it wasn't your fault. Sure, you acted way out of line," Harry shuffled his feet guiltily as I said this, "But you've always been overprotective. And you clearly care." I decided that I didn't want another row with Harry, and finally chose between the two routes I had set up for myself before (being insulted or touched by Harry's outburst). "After all, only you would notice that I didn't want to snog some guy, and that means something. How did you tell anyway?" I asked Harry curiously.

"Well, you were completely stiff. That and your eyes were opened in horror," Harry laughed.

I shook my head. "I'm a horrible girlfriend. Or was..." I added.

"No," Harry reassured me. "He just wasn't the right guy."

"No?" I asked Harry, looking up quickly. "Then is there *any* guy that's right for me?"

"I think there is," Harry replied, staring at me intently. I had the tiniest inkling that perhaps he meant himself, but knowing me I probably had the signs all wrong. I had all the other times, so what was to stop me now?

Harry looked away, commenting that it was getting late and we should head back, which we did, in complete silence.

Although that didn't prevent us from smiling and giving one another those "looks" that we were apparently famous for.

And as we continued to exchange smiles, as the sun set behind us (it was amazing to think that we had been out for five hours), it was clear to both of us why we were so happy. Because whether or not either of us would admit it to the other, the fact that we had just rid ourselves of our "significant other" was a weight off not only our own, but *both* our shoulders.

All right. So the day wasn't so bad. I originally thought that the break up had made this day horrible, but in retrospective, it's what actually made my day.

Which is horrible for me to say, I know. But still. I got to have another one of those moments with Harry.

And who knows? Maybe Harry's writing in a journal himself about how he had one of those moments with me.

Of course, I'm probably being completely delusional, not to mention beyond optimistic, and Harry is probably considering Lavender as his newest girlfriend.

Oh Merlin. I surely hope not.

What's worse, Ginny came up here a few seconds ago. I didn't have enough time to tell her about my day, as she only came to squeal to me that Hogwarts was holding a ball in two weeks. Apparently a certain school had finally hit its 1000th birthday. Three guesses which.

And I must say, I'm not looking forward to it. Because a ball involves a date, and a date involves a guy.

And I happened to have just lost a guy.

And the guy that I do like most likely doesn't even feel the same way. Because I'm another Ron to him.

And we all know that Harry is not gay and would never date Ron. Then again, if he were, I wouldn't be able to date him anyway.

Did I mention that I hate my life?

Chapter 14

November 9,

I honestly don't know how on earth our (that is Harry and my) breakups were kept secret for so long – two full days. That's amazing considering the most "gossipy" girls in the school are not only in my grade, but also in my house.

As usual, I knew nothing about the rumors flying about, but luckily for me (or maybe unluckily), Ginny came running into my room, catching me up.

Apparently she's all ready to help me again now that I'm no longer deemed a "hopeless case."

To which my only response is, "Thanks, Gin. Thanks so much."

"OH MY GOD!"

Ginny's scream alerted me of her presence seconds before she burst into my room. She had obviously ran a great distance, as she was clutching at a stitch on her side, panting deeply, and her usually perfect red hair was strewn this way and that.

"What on *earth* is the matter with you?" I asked Ginny, completely shocked by her appearance. Yes, I was entirely aware that Ginny was nowhere close to shallow, but for her to be in such disarray, to look as if she had just survived some sort of natural disaster...it just wasn't Ginny-like.

I got up from my desk immediately, setting down my quill that I had been using to write an essay for Transfiguration on why "transfiguring one's self into another identity is impossible." I had just been in the middle of my analysis of polyjuice potion, which was critical to my thesis.

I approached Ginny, who by now was breathing regularly.

Unfortunately, now she had breath to yell at me.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Ginny demanded, poking me slightly in the shoulder.

"Hey!" I exclaimed, swatting at her hand. "Don't do that!"

Ginny simply glared at me in response. I decided to take that as a tentative, "Okay."

"Anyway," I continued, "why didn't I tell you what?"

"That you broke up with Terry and Harry broke up with Parvati *two days ago!*" Ginny let out a frustrated scream as she finished the sentence. She was clearly rather peeved at me.

I gave a pathetic little shrug. "I didn't realize it was important. Anyway, since when are you involved with this anymore? I thought you were sick of me."

Ginny threw up her hands. "It's different now that you actually have a chance, you git!"

"Now that I actually have a chance?" I repeated.

"Yes," Ginny said, nodding her head fervently.

"Why thank you, Ginerva," I replied sarcastically, rolling my eyes slightly. "That makes me feel loads better!"

"First of all, I believe I made it clear that under no circumstances was I to be referred to as 'Ginevra,'" Ginny instructed me.

"You sound like a textbook," I interjected.

"Well it can't always be you," Ginny countered. "Second, you took what I said completely wrong."

"Did I?"

"Yes," Ginny sighed, frustrated. "What I meant to say is that before you didn't have a chance with him."

"Gin," I replied with a small sarcastic laugh, "I'm pretty sure the reason why I was so insulted is because I *did* take it that way."

"Oh." Ginny was silent for a second. "Heh... Sorry."

"Right," I responded, walking away from Ginny and returning to my desk.

"Well, let me explain what I meant." Ginny approached me.

"Go on," I prompted her, while I straightened up some books.

"What I meant by you didn't have a chance with him before was that he was dating Parvati. You couldn't possibly be with him while he was taken."

"That *is* true," I admitted, leaving my organizing to later. "So...what are we going to do about this?"

"You mean you're actually going to let me help this time?" Ginny squealed, jumping up and down a bit.

"Yes," I sighed.

Ginny squealed again and then began an explanation of what we would do. "It's simple! I'll make you look so drop dead gorgeous that Harry will jump you at the dance!"

I raised an eyebrow at Ginny. "Are you kidding me?" I demanded of her. "That's just...mental."

"No! No! Listen!" Ginny continued, as eager as ever. "We'll put you in this simply gorgeous dress...let me summon the magazine that has it...*accio* Bewitching Fashion Magazine!" A second later a magazine flew into Ginny's hand, and she opened it, showing me a page of dresses. "You'll wear this one!" she proclaimed proudly, pointing at a very pink and very ruffly dress robe.

I could barely contain my laughter. "Ginny that would never work."

"And why not?" Ginny demanded huffily, throwing the magazine done.

“Because I refuse to wear anything so hideous,” I informed her. “I already told you, I don’t wear pink. And definitely not ruffles. Anyway, didn’t Pansy Parkinson wear that to the Yule Ball?”

“Fine,” Ginny sighed. Then she perked up. “I know!”

“Not again...”

“You could wear a yellow dress robe with duck slippers!”

I gaped at her and was finally able to muster a response. “You really are mental.”

“No, no!” Ginny told me, “You see, it’s the latest trend! I’m sure Harry would just love it.”

“If any of your plans *ever* get Harry and me together,” I told her, “I’ll name our first child after you.”

Ginny looked at me thoughtfully. “Really?”

I didn’t respond but simply burst into fits of laughter.

“You know,” Ginny continued, “you could just ask him to go with you.”

“I suppose I could...” I responded hesitantly.

“Do it,” Ginny said. “Within this week.”

“Or what?” I countered, surprised by Ginny’s threatening tone of voice.

“Or someone else will,” Ginny told me. “Harry isn’t just some guy, Hermione. He’s the ‘Boy-who-lived.’ Not to mention the fact that he’s rather good looking. If you don’t think girls will be harping on him...there’s only so long that he will be able to refuse. And then you’re out of luck.”

There was a huge moment of silence as Ginny’s words set in my brain. I gulped.

“Right,” I said nervously. “I’ll ask him.”

“Good,” Ginny replied, now upbeat again. “So, are you going to name the kid Ginny or Ginevra? Personally I prefer Ginny, but that’s just because I hate the name Ginevra.”

“Oh, sod off.”

November 14

It sounds simple enough, right? Just ask Harry to the ball. No big deal.

Except, it is a big deal. Because how do I know that he’ll say yes because he actually likes me the way Ginny insists he does? How do I know he won’t just say yes because 1) I’m his best friend, 2) he feels sorry for me, 3) he has no one else to go with, or 4) he feels guilty for chancing away my boyfriend, the one guy who would’ve gone with me?

Exactly. I don’t.

Which is why, five days later, I still was yet to ask Harry to accompany me to the ball celebrating the 1000th anniversary of Hogwarts.

And also why the plan didn’t go quite the way Ginny and I planned.

In other words it failed completely.

“Merlin’s beard, just ask him already,” Ginny hissed into my ear. The four of us, that is Harry, Ron, Ginny and myself, were in the Heads’ common room. Harry and Ron were playing wizard’s chess (great surprise there), and Ginny and I were curled up on the couch, a few feet away from them, enjoying the comfort and heat emanating from the fireplace. The temperature was back down to –3 degrees and snow was coming down so fast that if you were to look out the window, all you would see was white.

“I can’t ask him here,” I whispered back urgently.

“And why not?” Ginny demanded.

"Be-because Ron's here!" I sputtered.

"Oh, come off it, Hermione," Ginny exclaimed softly, rolling her eyes. "Ron wouldn't care if you asked Harry out now. I mean, for goodness sakes, he knows that you're madly in love with him."

"But the last thing Ron heard from me was that I was over Harry," I informed her.

"Please," Ginny laughed lightly. "Even *Ron* can see that you were lying."

"Oh, do shut up," I whispered at her angrily. "Fine, I'll ask him now, okay?"

"And about time, too," Ginny muttered.

"I heard that," I told her, then left the comfort of the couch to tap Harry on the shoulder.

"Uh huh," Harry answered, immersed in the game that he was unsurprisingly losing.

"Do you think I could have a word?" I asked him, talking so fast I'm surprised he even heard me.

"Er, sure," Harry replied, looking up, and obviously wondering what on earth I needed to speak to him about.

He stood up, and while he did so Ron looked at me, raised his eyebrow, and mouthed, "The ball?"

I was about to respond, but Harry was looking at me again, and so I dragged him off to the corner. On our way there I saw Ginny and Ron exchange glances, smiling knowingly.

"What's going on?" Harry asked me once we had reached a place of moderate privacy.

Suddenly my throat became restricted and I felt as if I was going to be sick.

"I...that is...I wanted to ask..." I could feel my palms sweating as I clenched them tightly, not understanding why on earth I couldn't get something as simple as, "Would you like to go to the ball with me?" out of my mouth.

"Yes?" Harry prompted.

"I...I..."

"Hermione, are you okay?" Harry asked worriedly. "Because you seem extremely nervous about something."

"Me? Nervous? Whatever gave you such an idea?" I exclaimed in a high-pitched voice, feeling as if I was choking on air.

Harry stared at me and I knew he thought I must have finally lost it.

Realizing that I needed to say something, anything, to stop this awkward moment, I burst out, "I need a chess piece!"

"A *what*?" Harry looked at me in surprise. He obviously hadn't expected such a question. Of course, I hadn't planned on asking him that, and I had no idea why I had. Now I was in a rut.

"A...a chess piece."

"Why on earth would you need a *chess* piece? And why did you have to drag me all the way here to ask me?" Harry questioned me.

"That's a good question," I replied, stalling for time. "I brought you here because I thought Ron might pull a, er, Ron, and make fun of me."

"For asking for a chess piece?"

"It is Ron..." I said lamely, already feeling bad for using Ron.

"And why exactly do you need a chess piece?" Harry continued questioning me.

"I have a perfectly reasonable explanation for that."

“Would you like to share it with me?” Harry asked.

“Of course,” I continued. “You see I need a chess piece...for...er...for Transfiguration homework!”

“Transfiguration homework?” Harry repeated, not believing a single word I was saying.

“That’s it. I need to transfigure it into a...a...human for our next class.” I immediately realized that I had made a huge mistake, and Harry did too.

“For one,” Harry told me, staring at me suspiciously, “that wasn’t our Transfiguration homework.”

“Oh, well...” I had no explanation this time and simply trailed off, allowing Harry to continue with his interrogation.

“For two, you can’t transfigure an item into a human. In fact, our Transfiguration homework was an essay proving just that.”

“Exactly!” I exclaimed.

“Exactly what?”

“I’m using it for the essay,” I explained quickly.

“But you just said— ”

“I’m using the chess piece to *prove* that you can’t transfigure a chess piece into a person,” I interrupted Harry.

“But, it’s a writing assignment,” Harry said, looking utterly confused. “There’s no demonstration needed.”

“Well, I do need evidence. It’s just an experiment,” I informed Harry, very proud that my lying abilities were back to their normal standards. “I’m going to use the trials as proof.”

“But *why* a chess piece?” Harry demanded. “I mean, can’t you just use any old object lying around?”

Damn. He had gotten me there. Okay, so my lying skills still were in need of a bit of work before they were back to normal.

“Right...” I sighed, wishing with all my heart that Harry would be more like Ron and have no deductive reasoning skills whatsoever. “Er, well, you got me,” I said, pretending that I had purposely made up this story (which, admittedly, I had, but for a different reason). “I guess the real reason I want a chess piece is so that I can play chess properly and possibly join in once in a while...maybe even beat Ron.”

Harry looked at me in disbelief. “And you plan on doing that with just one chess piece?”

“Er...”

“Don’t you need a chess set, not simply one piece, to learn how to play?”

“Oh,” I mumbled. “Right. I’ll just...go...then.”

“Hermione,” Harry said, placing a hand on my shoulder. “Are you sure you’re okay? You’re acting very...off. I mean, you’re the brightest witch of your age and, no offense, you’re behaving a bit...well...you’re not behaving like yourself.”

I smiled weakly at Harry. “I suppose I’m just stressing too much about NEWTs. I mean, they determine our future.”

“They’re not for seven months,” Harry pointed out.

“Well, you know me,” I said, faking a laugh. “Always worrying about my studies.”

Harry looked as if he wanted to say something, but instead he dropped his hand and said, “Well, just...relax. You’ll do fine.” I knew immediately that he didn’t believe that NEWTs were what was bothering me, but I was thankful that he didn’t continue to question me. We both returned to the other end of the common room, joining Ginny and Ron. Ginny looked at me expectantly and Ron, although he started the game of chess up with Harry again, had leaned his body slightly so that he could attempt to ease drop.

“So,” Ginny whispered excitedly. “What happened? Are you going together?”

“No,” I replied glumly.

“He said no!” Ginny exclaimed, covering her mouth with her hand in disbelief and, above all, horror.

“I asked him if I could borrow a chess piece!” I exclaimed, throwing myself miserably onto her shoulder.

“A chess piece?” Ginny asked, taken aback. “You asked him for a bloody *chess piece*?”

“I panicked!” I muttered into her shoulder. “I couldn’t bear to ask him. I can’t go through with it, Gin. He’ll just say no.”

“No, he won’t,” Ginny said sternly. “At least he won’t if you don’t ask him for a chess piece again.”

“If he said yes it wouldn’t be because he liked me the same way that I like him!” I protested.

“Hermione, are you ever going to believe that he likes you more than as a friend?”

“No,” I mumbled, my head still on her shoulder.

“That’s it,” Ginny said, still in a low voice. “From here on out, I’m taking control.”

“What?” I exclaimed worriedly, removing my head from her shoulder.

“Just leave it up to me,” Ginny said, giving me a slight pat on the back.

So now Ginny’s going to, somehow, get us together.

Oh Merlin. If she puts me in a duck suit, I swear to god I’m murdering her.

*Well, I'll only murder her if she puts me in that pink ruffly number.
Honestly. And I thought I had no fashion sense.*

Somehow I predict doom in my future.

Chapter 15

November 16,

Ginny is yet to set me up with someone (thank Merlin), but now she has ordered me to go to Hogsmeade with her tomorrow after classes. Due to the short notice of the ball, the Hogwarts administration has decided to let all students third year and up, who have permission to visit Hogsmeade, reserve the right to visit Hogsmeade in the afternoon, at least until the ball. Meanwhile the first and second years are getting a once in a lifetime chance by being accompanied by a few teachers to visit Hogsmeade Friday. Of course, Professor Dumbledore sent out an emergency Hogsmeade permission slip to every first and second year students' guardians, so there's a chance that many won't be able to go. They'll have to resort to requesting dress robes from home, I suppose.

I swear on my life, if Ginny tries to force me into a pair of yellow robes with matching duck shoes, I will skewer her. I will make it my life goal to find some spell to skewer her.

And if one doesn't exist, I'll have to make it up.

"Gin," I called after my racing redheaded friend. "Gin!" I ran after her, attempting to keep up, but was shortly out of breath and had to resort to calling after her, walking slowly while nursing a stitch on my side.

"GINNY!" I finally screamed at the top of my lungs.

Ginny whipped around, stopping about twenty feet in front of me. "What is it?" she demanded, placing her hands angrily on her hips. She was clearly not pleased with me for disrupting her pilgrimage to the Hogsmeade clothing stores.

"Could you *please*, for the love of Merlin, slow down," I begged her, finally reaching where she was. "I'm not an athlete. I don't play Quidditch. Therefore I can barely run, let alone keep up with someone like you."

Ginny sighed. "Fine. I just *really* want to get there."

"I couldn't tell," I said, sarcasm dripping from each word. Ginny glared at me but grabbed my hand as she continued. We didn't stop until we arrived in front of a small store with a sign on top that said, "Sickle Styles."

"Sickle Styles?" I snorted, staring at the name. "That has got to be the most ridiculous name of a store I've ever heard."

Ginny shrugged. "I suppose. But it *is* amazing clothes for amazing prices. Come on, we need to find you something." Ginny tugged at my cloak, and as reluctant as I was to go inside a store that sounded like a, well...I didn't know what it sounded like, honestly, but certainly not a clothing shop, I was even more reluctant to stay out in the blustery and extremely cold weather.

We entered the shop and immediately a woman with fake blonde hair, heavily painted eyes and lips, and a voice so sweet I thought I was going to die from disgust approached us and asked if we needed her help. Thankfully Ginny replied that she had everything under control, which she clearly did as she marched through racks of clothes, promptly arriving at the Dress Robes section.

"Sit there," she instructed me, pointing at a bench. "I'll find you something."

I made a face. "Ginny, why don't you let me pick for myself? I mean, I found my Yule Ball dress in fourth year, and I do remember quite a few jaws dropping."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Yes, well, then you had a boyfriend, or at least something close to it. Now we're attempting to gain you a boyfriend. We don't need jaws dropping, Hermione, dear. We need men jumping you."

"I already told you that theory is simply ridiculous," I informed Ginny, sniffing slightly as I obeyed her earlier order and sat down. "And slightly disgusting, not to mention barbaric."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "You think *everything* is barbaric," she retorted, and began her search for the perfect dress robe, her nimble fingers quickly going through the rack. After a few minutes a pile of dress robes sat on the bench next to me, ranging from forest green to hot pink.

"I want to tell you know," I notified Ginny as she motioned for me to stand up and try all the dress robes on in the dressing room, "that I will not try on anything that is a shade of pink."

Ginny turned around and, rather huffily, flung the five or so pink robes she had picked on to the bench.

"Happy now?" she demanded, returning to me.

"Very."

"Now try these on," Ginny ordered, piling the robes into my outstretched arms and pushing me into a nearby dressing room.

"Thank you for being so patient and polite!" I called out behind me. I could've sworn I heard Ginny mutter something that included a few well-chosen curse words, but perhaps my hearing was deceiving me as I had about a mile-high of clothes pressed up to my ears.

I sighed sadly as I looked at the robes, knowing that if I tried all of them on it would take hours. I quickly found all of the blue and green robes, as those were the two colors my mother, and Mrs. Weasley, said fit me best.

From there I sorted out all of the robes with ruffles or lace, and I was finally left with three robes, two of which were green.

I tried both a green dress robe and a midnight-blue dress robe on, both of which looked exactly the same. They were nice, but I felt that they simply weren't what I was looking for. I then tried on the last dress robe, which was a deep, forest green.

The dress worn underneath, which matched the robes that went on top, flowed gently down to my ankles. It had a square neckline, which was covered in a row of tiny pearls. The over robe, as I called it, was

held together at my waist by a gorgeous golden clasp, which had tiny engravings of roses and leaves, causing the robes to cling lightly to my figure. Now, I didn't have as gorgeous a figure as Ginny or Lavender (or even Parvati I noted to myself, uncharacteristically slightly bitter), but it was nice enough so that I could wear dress robes such as these and not feel self-conscious the entire night.

I stared at myself in the mirror for a few minutes and decided that I definitely approved. After all, it met all of my requirements: not slutty, nothing that showed too much cleavage (not that I had too much to show, but still), not pink, not lacy, not frilly, was blue or green, simple, and above all it had nothing to do with ducks. I looked out of the dressing room stall to ensure that no one else was around and then stepped out, presenting myself to Ginny.

Ginny seemed to light up as she gushed, "Oh Merlin, Hermione! You look amazing."

I couldn't help but blush and smile happily. "You think it looks alright?"

"It looks perfect!" Ginny beamed. "It was absolutely made for you."

Pleased by Ginny's response I returned to the dressing room to put my regular clothes back on. As I did so I couldn't help but point out to Ginny that, as usual, I was right: "I told you I could pick out the right robes on my own."

Once again I heard Ginny mutter, and I knew for sure this time that I had perfectly adequate hearing. She was most definitely cursing as if there was no tomorrow.

November 17,

Oh Merlin. I thought she was going to help me. No, helping people is too easy for one Ginevra Molly Weasley. Ginny has to go ahead and decide that she'll set me up with a blind date for the ball!

Is she mental? I asked for her to help me get together with Harry, not set me up with some stranger!

Unless, of course, that stranger is Harry, only she doesn't want me to know it. But what if it isn't Harry, but she's just saying she's setting me up without specifying who because she knows I'll assume it's Harry and then she'll get to laugh because the joke is, once again, on me? Or maybe she knows I'll think she's trying to pull a prank on me so that I won't believe that in actuality she's really attempting to help me get with Harry, and...

Argh. Headache. Must stop now before head bursts.

"I don't *want* to be set up," I hissed angrily at Ginny as we lugged our bags of Millennia Ball necessities (well, necessities in Ginny's world – dress robes, shoes, make-up, etc. Only I didn't buy any make-up, much to Gin's displeasure). Ginny had just informed me that she was going to set me up with someone.

"It will do you some good," Ginny replied back airily. "Besides, I'm sure you'll be perfectly happy with the result."

I glared at my friend. "Will it be someone I know?" I asked her waspishly.

Ginny smirked. "Oh yes, it will *definitely* be someone you know."

"That smirk worries me," I told her. "You're not setting me up with someone like Malfoy are you?"

Ginny looked as if she was going to be sick. "You honestly think so low of me?" she cried dramatically. She burst out into laughter a moment later. "No, of course not. I'm not thick, Hermione."

"Then who is it?" I asked her eagerly.

"You'll just have to wait for the 21st," she told me, taking up a brisker pace that I couldn't keep up with.

"I hate you," I mumbled, shifting the weight of bags from my right arm to my left.

"I heard that!" Ginny called behind her.

Ginny picked up speed once more, enough so that she ended up arriving at Hogwarts ten minutes before me. In fact, she ended up in my (well, Harry and my) common room ten minutes before me.

Note to self: Honestly. Just change the password already. Quit the stalling. This is getting ridiculous.

I walked in to discover, much to my horror, Ginny and Harry talking to one another in hushed voices. I stood there, my bags hanging at my side (which were very heavy, might I remind you), gaping at them. Finally, after dropping the bags I demanded of Ginny, "What are you doing?"

Ginny shrugged, a look of pure innocence on her face. "Nothing. Why don't you go sit by the fire and we'll join you shortly." I looked at Ginny intensely, but found I was unable to read her. Sighing, I decided to obey Ginny's request.

Setting my bags down and kicking off my flats, I curled up on the sofa, tucking my feet underneath me. I turned lightly so that I could at the very least see what was taking place between Harry and Ginny, but at the same time they wouldn't notice me. I placed my elbow and my lower arm on the top of the couch, leaning my chin on top of my arm.

I saw Ginny whisper to Harry, her hands, unfortunately, lay still at her sides, providing me with no hints as to the direction of the conversation. However, Harry looked over at me, and Ginny, after quickly glancing in my direction as well, diverted Harry's attention away from me. After a few more exchanging of words, Harry smiled widely, nodded his head, and, much to my confusion, hugged Ginny. Ginny, whose face had previously looked rather bleak, broke into a grin and bounced up and down happily. She too hugged Harry, and soon after led him over to where I was sitting.

In an attempt to appear as if I knew nothing of what had occurred between them, I swiftly picked up a book that lay on the side table, flipped to a random page, and began reading.

Ginny sat down on the armchair to my right, while Harry took the chair to my left. Over the top of my book I noticed that they were exchanging smiles, looking at one another constantly.

"Would anyone care to inform me what in the name of Merlin is going on here?" I asked finally, unable to take another of those sickeningly sweet looks that were so horribly uncharacteristic of Ginny.

"Nothing's going on," Harry replied quickly.

"You're lying," I informed him, setting my book down.

"Well aren't you Miss No-Nonsense?" Ginny giggled.

"I'm sorry that I find it suspicious that you two are exchanging the weirdest looks imaginable," I proclaimed, fuming.

"Nothing's going on, 'Mione,'" Harry told me, rolling his eyes slightly. "You're too paranoid for your own good."

"And you're too presumptuous for your own good," I snapped at him. "Where on earth did you come up with such a stupid nickname as 'Mione'? Since when have I ever gone by a nickname before?"

I will admit, for a man I am supposedly head-over-heels in love with, I was treating Harry rather badly, but those looks were just so infuriating! Furthermore I've never enjoyed having nicknames. Anyway, my Great Aunt Catherine, who I hate with every fibre of my being, always thought it was cute to call me nicknames, including 'Mione' or 'Mi.' My parents didn't name me 'Mione,' 'Mi,' or 'Herm' for that matter, as Ginny had tried earlier in the term. True, my parents chose the name Hermione to show off their intelligence, for how many parents named their child after a Greek God (in my case Hermes), but all the same I was proud of my name. And Hermione Ginepro had my name, and she was a lovely actress.

That was a rather long side-rant. I think I'll get back to the main story instead of boring you, or rather my future self.

Harry looked daunted by my outburst, and quickly looked at Ginny.

“Did *you* tell him that I would enjoy being called ‘Mione’?” I demanded of Ginny angrily. Ginny sighed and then reluctantly nodded her head yes. “After I specifically told you that I disliked being called ‘Herm’, where do you get off telling people that it’s perfectly acceptable to call me ‘Mione’?” Even I must admit I was surprised by how upset I was by all of this.

Ginny stared at me. “Mione isn’t Herm,” she said finally, clearly offended.

“I don’t care,” I hissed at her, as Harry watched our quarrel, frightened. “You *knew* I hated nicknames. And you just decide to instruct people on what to call me. Well guess what Ginny it’s my name! How would you feel if I told your friends to call you Ginevra?”

“Somebody hasn’t had her monthly dose of chocolate,” Ginny said biting, glaring at me through darkened honey eyes.

My own eyes narrowed into slits as I countered, rather weakly, “Sod off,” and stomped off to my room, leaving a confused Harry, an angry Ginny, and a forgotten book behind.

After ten minutes of moping in my room for reasons I couldn’t even think up, Ginny finally banged on my door. Not waiting for me to let her in, she flung it open and charged over to where I sat on my bed, hugging a pillow closely to me.

“What the bloody hell was that all about?” Ginny demanded, poking me roughly in the shoulder.

“Like you don’t know,” I said bitterly, turning slightly away from her.

“Actually, I don’t, so why don’t you enlighten me?” Ginny placed herself squarely in front of me, holding me by the shoulders so I couldn’t turn away again.

“You and Harry,” I said quickly, containing the urge to cry. “I saw you too! You don’t want us together. You just tricked me. I saw the way

you were whispering and then how you continually looked at one another and giggled. I'm not *thick* Ginny," I spat.

"Apparently you are," Ginny replied acidly. "Do you honestly think, after all of these years, I'd do something so...so...so *Malfoy-like* as that?" Ginny shook me slightly. "Well?" I gave a little snuffle. "Oh, stand up!" Ginny instructed me, looking disgusted. She jumped up from the bed and pulled me with her. "Look at you. You're pathetic."

"I am not!" I exclaimed, quickly wiping my eyes clear of any stray tears.

"Then quit moping around," Ginny told me. Realizing that I was still offended by her previous comment, she sighed. "Hermione, of course I don't think you're pathetic."

"Yes you do," I replied sadly.

"Okay, maybe just a bit," Ginny said, smiling gently. "But how could you ever think that I would do something like that?"

"Am I allowed to plead insanity?"

"Just this one," Ginny laughed.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Go on."

"What were you doing with Harry then?" I asked.

Ginny bit her lip. "Can't tell you."

"Were you setting me up with him?" I asked her, suddenly eager.

By now I could swear that Ginny's canines were piercing her lip. "Can't tell you that either."

"Does that mean that you did?" I interrogated her.

"It doesn't mean anything," Ginny replied firmly. "You'll just have to wait and see."

"You promise that this will all work out?"

Ginny sighed. "No, I don't." As my face fell Ginny quickly added, "But I'm doing everything in my power to make sure it does!"

I began playing with my fingers, thinking deeply. Something was bothering me, but I didn't want to sound accusatory. Finally I burst out, "I just don't get it Ginny!"

"Get what?" Ginny asked me, confused.

"Why don't you just tell Harry to ask me?" I begged her. "To the dance? I mean if you're so convinced that he...he reciprocates my feelings... Well, at least this way I'd *truly* know if he felt the same way."

Ginny blushed and I could have sworn I heard her mutter something that included the words, "children," "named" and "me."

"What did you say?" I asked her, raising an eyebrow.

"Er, nothing!" Ginny exclaimed. "Hermione I...I have to go," she said in a rush. "I'll talk to you later. And don't worry!" she added over her shoulder as she left my room. "You'll know by this Saturday!"

"I can't last four days!" I cried, but Ginny had already run downstairs.

I returned to my bed, with only one thought on my mind.

Ginny Weasley enjoys torturing me.

Sighing sadly I reached over to my nightstand where a box of chocolates lay that I had ordered from Hogsmeade a few weeks ago. I took one and plopped it into my mouth, savouring the taste. I immediately felt happier.

And people say chocolate isn't the solution to your problems.

Chapter 16

November 18,

Okay, so I got sick of waiting for Ginny and acting helpless. Sue me. My parents happen to have a very good lawyer (which has been proven many a times thanks to idiot patients blaming my parents for every little thing that goes wrong inside their mouth).

I can only act so weak about something so frivolous as asking a guy out for so long (this will be a fun sentence to read in twenty years). Honestly. I barely recognized myself these past few days, what with the stuttering and the sweaty palms and the sodding chess piece. I'm still hitting myself over the head for that one.

I was Hermione Granger, Damnit, one of the smartest witches of the century, and I was going to bloody well act like it.

Too bad I couldn't wait to act like myself until after the ball.

&

"Hermione," Harry said softly, walking towards me, "there's something I've been meaning to tell you for as long as I can remember."

"Yes?" I asked apprehensively, begging whatever force controlled humanity, if any, that this would be it, that Harry James Potter would profess his undying love for me.

"We've been friends for seven years now," Harry told me, taking my hand in his. I felt my heart jump. "I was wondering if you...if you'd like to be my Miss Granger."

"Your what?" I exclaimed. What on earth was he talking about? His Miss Granger? Okay, maybe if he had said his "Mrs. Potter," that might have made more sense (though I do admit that would be rushing things quite a bit), but to ask me to be his Miss Granger? I already was Miss Granger!

Maybe he did mean Mrs. Potter. But then again, where was his ring? I was about to ask him this when Harry repeated, "Miss Granger." I found myself listen in surprise as his voice slowly turned into that of a very peeved woman. "Miss Granger. Miss Granger..."

"Miss Granger? Miss *Granger!*"

"Har-wah?" I exclaimed, jumping out of my daydream. I looked up to find McGonagall staring down at me through her glasses. I gulped.

"Were you *daydreaming*, Miss Granger?" McGonagall asked, clearly surprised and, if I was not mistaken, somewhat hurt.

I bit my lip, feeling horrible. Never had my mind wandered in a class (well, not including that time when Harry was going to break into Umbridge's office, but that was a special case), especially during Transfiguration. What's worse, Transfiguration was my favourite subject.

"I'm so sorry!" I exclaimed frantically, jumping up to properly apologize to my head of house. Ron and Harry gave me strange and startled looks, and I heard Ron whisper to Harry, "What the bloody Hell is wrong with her?" "Really I am," I continued anxiously. "I don't know what came over me."

"We'll blame this on a lack of sleep," McGonagall said. "You may sit down, Miss Granger."

I did so, completely mortified, but at the same time very grateful that McGonagall hadn't extracted house points.

"Now, back to the lesson," McGonagall instructed. "Well, your essays already addressed this subject, or rather *some* of your essays did, but we're going to more deeply examine exactly why humans can't be transfigured into other humans, as many of you, with the exception of Miss Granger, do not seem to have a proper understanding of this topic despite the fact that we've discussed it a numerous amount of times. This *will* be on the NEWTs, and this will be the last time I explain it, so take careful notes."

Sighing the class took out parchment and a quill. Even though I understood everything perfectly well, I took notes, more out of habit than anything. It was also a great way to distract me from what I know called, "The Harry Problem."

Half an hour later the bell rang, signifying lunch. Uncharacteristically stuffing my quills, books, and parchment into my bag, I grabbed all of my stuff and raced out of the classroom, desperate not to have McGonagall force me to talk to her about what was wrong with me.

I waited patiently for Harry and Ron outside of the door. When they walked into the corridor and spotted me, they immediately bombarded me with questions.

"Are you okay?"

"You're not having a breakdown or anything, are you?"

"Do you think McGonagall's still pissed?"

"Were you mortified?"

"What were you doing?"

"What was it about?"

"Did you actually daydream?"

"How fast do you think the news will spread?"

"Who was in it?"

"Was there any sex?"

"Ronald!" I cried out, disgusted. "Of course there wasn't any sex. Honestly. Use your head. Unlike males, sex isn't the only thing on a female's mind."

"Sex isn't the only thing on my mind!" Ron protested as the three of us made our way to the Great Hall. "There's also— "

"Food?" Harry and I guessed at the same time. We exchanged grins.

“Actually, yes,” Ron replied happily as Harry and I laughed. We entered the Great Hall and sat down at our usual seats at Gryffindor Table (Ron, Harry, then me). Harry and I were surprised, however, when Luna sat next to Ron a few moments later, carrying the latest edition of *The Quibbler* underneath her arm. One of the headlines read, “The Ministry of Magic is protecting our interest. Or is it? New evidence proves that the Ministry is actually a secret organization out to steal all of our money.”

“Hello, Ronald,” Luna smiled dreamily at Ron.

“Hi Luna!” Ron beamed, giving her a light peck on the cheek.

Harry and I exchanged a look that clearly said, “When did this happen?”

“You two...” Harry began.

“...are going out?” I finished.

“We are,” Luna replied, as Ron blushed. “I assume you two are as well.” She looked expectantly at us, her huge eyes bearing into our own.

“No!” Harry and I exclaimed at the same time as Ron smirked.

“That’s odd,” Luna replied, poking her wand behind her ear and laying out *The Quibbler* in front of her. “Because usually couples finish one another’s sentences. Maybe you should become one. That would be rather nice. If you got married you’d have the same initials. That’d make place settings easy.” Luna grabbed a roll from a basket in front of her and munched on it while Harry and I stared at her in horror.

Ron looked at the two of us and, luckily, decided to break the silence.

“So, excited about the ball?” Ron asked, clapping his hands together.

Did I say luckily? Scratch that. Ron had just switched to the one topic I did not want to talk about.

No one spoke up except for Luna ("I'm thinking of making a bottle-cap bracelet to match my necklace. Do you suppose my radish earrings would go with the bottle-caps, or should I make bottle-cap earrings as well? I do rather like my radishes... You don't think there'll be any nargles hanging around, do you? *The Quibbler* said that there's a new infestation of them at Hogwarts.") and it was then that I decided to pluck up the courage and ask Harry. After all, the worst he could say was no, right?

"So, Harry," I began casually as I dished some spaghetti dish onto my plate, careful to avoid his eyes. "I was wondering...would you...would you like to go to the ball with me?" I finally spat out, just wanting to get this part over with.

I heard Ron choke on his pumpkin juice (Dean, who was passing by, thumped him on the back) and I could have sworn I heard Ginny, who was sitting next to Neville, gasp in horror. I stared determinedly at my plate while I awaited Harry's answer.

"Oh, Hermione," I heard Harry reply. "I'm so sorry. I already agreed to go with someone else yesterday."

Oh. Right. No. The worst he could say was no.

Whoever said that the worst someone can say is no was a complete idiot, because, maybe it's just me, but "no" hurts a great deal.

"Tha-that's fine," I told him, trying to control the feeling of utter despair I was currently experiencing. *If only you had asked him sooner*, I thought to myself sorrowfully. Still not facing Harry, I piled on salad next to my spaghetti. "Anyway, it...it isn't as if I was asking you as a date or...or anything. I just, you know, wanted to prevent Ginny from setting me up with someone who would lead me to the lake and try to drown me or, you know, something." I mentally hit myself. Had I just used the term "you know"? Worst, had I just used it *twice*? In *one* sentence?

"I'm fairly sure that no one at Hogwarts knows how to or would want to kill you the muggle way," Harry said, trying to reassure me and failing miserably. "And I bet that whoever Ginny sets you up with will be great."

I had to stuff my mouth with salad to keep myself from snorting.

I carried on chewing intensely as I listened to Ron explain how he and Luna had finally got together (Harry had asked him how it happened).

"Well," Ron said, blushing furiously, "I was thinking about what Hermione had said that day when we talked about—"

"When we talked about you two!" I cut him off quickly, glaring at him. Thank Merlin I had finished swallowing my salad.

"Oh, right!" Ron said. "When we were...we were talking about that. Heh."

&

I wanted to shoot Ron at that moment. Really. Okay, maybe not, but how hard is it for him to keep his mouth shut? Honestly, he should just wear a shirt that says, "Insert foot in mouth."

I guess I am being too hard on him. After all, he really is a sweet friend.

But is it really so hard to learn how to keep quiet?

&

Harry, however, was not an idiot. "What were you two really talking about?" he demanded.

"Ron and Luna," I repeated, "that's all."

Harry raised an eyebrow at me. "Honest!" I insisted vehemently.

"Fine," he sighed. "Go on with your story then Ron."

"Well, I remembered what Hermione had said about asking Ginny to talk to Luna," Ron explained. "At first I had politely said that I didn't think it was such a good idea."

"Politely?" I laughed. "Try adamantly."

Ron glared at me slightly but continued. "Finally I gave in and talked to Ginny. She was thrilled at the very idea and went to talk to Luna. It ended up that Luna liked me too, so Ginny told me just that. The next day I spotted her in the halls and asked if she wanted to go to Hogsmeade with me some weekend."

"What did she say?" Harry asked.

"Obviously yes," I said with a roll of my eyes. "They're going out, aren't they?"

"I'll tell the story, thank you," Ron proclaimed. "Actually, she didn't say yes."

"Well that explains why you two are together," I replied sarcastically, viciously ripping the roll I had just taken from the centre plate in half. Luckily no one noticed, as they were too caught up in Ron's story.

"She kissed me," Ron grinned. "Actually, we ended up having a full out snog in the hallway."

"I now have horrible images of you snogging someone forever embedded into my brain," Harry commented, closing his eyes in feigned disgust. "Thanks Ron."

"No problem mate."

"I hope we never have to catch you two snogging in the hallways during our patrols," Harry sighed, cutting up some chicken.

"Don't worry," Ron promised.

"Yes, we'll be too busy shagging in the Room of Requirement to be in the hallways during your patrols," Luna said matter-of-factly. Ron blanched.

I sat there listening to Harry and Ron joke back and forth (with some weird interruptions by Luna), as I realized that even Ron had someone now. Turning to my right I spotted Ginny and Neville. Ginny was giggling as Neville, blushing, kissed her quickly on the lips before

leaving her. Ginny sighed as she contently played with her food. Even Ginny and *Neville* were blissfully happy.

Why couldn't I have what Ginny and Neville had? What Ron and Luna had? What it seemed every single person in Hogwarts had?

Ginny will make this better, I thought to myself. *I know she will.*

Well she better, responded that ever annoying voice. *Because you're starting to drive me mad.*

Look who's talking?

Sod off.

Chapter 17

November 21,

After two weeks worth of anxious waiting, the ball was finally here. And guess who was dateless? You guessed it: me.

Okay, so technically I was anything but, seeing as Ginny had “set me up” with someone. Set me up. Ha! More like arranged to assassinate me.

I swear I’m not paranoid.

Anyway, the night didn’t go as I expected...I mean this both positively and negatively. Funnily enough, both are due to Ginny. It’s amazing how much pain and ecstasy one person can cause a girl.

I guess I’ll begin the afternoon of the ball...

&

“You’re not eating,” Harry noted as he stuffed his own mouth with turkey.

“Very observant of you,” I sighed, pushing chopped up potatoes around on my plate.

“Why aren’t you eating?”

“Because I’m too worried about tonight,” I explained sadly. “What with you— ” Realizing that I had almost slipped up and said, “What with you going with someone else,” I cut myself off. “I mean, what with Ginny setting me up with someone. I’ll probably end up dead by the end of the night. What’s the use in eating?”

“Don’t be so melodramatic, Hermione,” Harry laughed. “She’s just setting you up.”

“Anyway,” Ron added from the other side of the table, “if you’re going to end up dead, you might as well enjoy your last meal.”

I glared at Ron as Harry shook his head in disbelief.

“What?” Ron asked, looking between us.

“I don’t think that was exactly the type of advice she was looking for,” Harry muttered.

“Hey, it’s what I live by!” Ron exclaimed. “Eat while you can.”

“And that’s why it was the wrong advice,” I snapped at him. Ron could be so hopeless at times. Here I was, clearly suffering, and all he could think of was food. That or Luna. Wait. Luna. Where was Luna? She’d taken to sitting with Ron for every meal, yet, after looking around the Great Hall several times, she was clearly nowhere in sight.

“Ron, where’s Luna?” I asked him curiously.

“Oh,” Ron said between bites of food. “She went home.”

“But it’s not even Christmas break yet,” I replied, furrowing my brows.

“Well, she found out a week ago that her Aunt died and they’re having the funeral today, so she left last night. She’ll be back tomorrow.”

“Oh Merlin!” I exclaimed. “Her aunt died? Poor Luna...”

“Not really,” Ron shrugged. “She didn’t really like her.”

“Well that makes everything right and dandy, doesn’t it?” I responded, sarcasm dripping from every one of my words.

“I suppose,” Ron answered.

I shook my head in disbelief, and then something occurred to me. “Ron, who are you going to the ball with if Luna’s not here?” For some reason or another Ron’s eyes grew wide, but he quickly recovered.

“Oh, er, just some...some girl,” he said casually. “So, did you see that article about the Cannons?”

“What girl?” I prodded.

“I read that it’s predicted that they just might make the semi-finals this year.”

“Ronald, *what girl?*” I persisted, banging my silverware down on the table in frustration.

“Isn’t that wonderful?” Ron asked us, ignoring my question. I shook my head and sighed. Men. Any topic other than food and sports was too uncomfortable for them.

&

The rest of the day was rather boring. Harry, Ron, and I hung out at the library. I worked on an essay for Professor Snape while Harry and Ron started theirs. Meaning after writing their introduction they played a silent game of exploding snap. Madam Pince finally caught them, but by then it was six o’clock. Realizing with surprise that the ball would start in merely one hour, I headed up to my room (Ron and Harry went outside for a snowball fight, planning to get ready half an hour before seven). A few minutes later Ginny, accompanied by her bag of clothes and make up, joined me.

&

“Not even some lipstick?” Ginny begged me, taking out a bright red tube. “A light coating of mascara?”

“No,” I said firmly. “Nothing fancy. Just me.”

“What about your hair?” Ginny asked, taking out a bottle of Sleekeazy’s Hair Potion. “Straighten it? Even a little?”

“I said no, Ginny!”

“I don’t get it,” Ginny frowned, crossing her arms. “In fourth year you got all dressed up for *Krum*, and you didn’t even like him that much! Now you refuse to even straighten your hair for Harry?”

"I'm going as Hermione and that's that," I told her. "I'm not going to be liked for looking like Lavender, thank you. I'm going to be liked for looking like me, and if you can't handle that, well that's too bad for you."

"When you suddenly start standing up to me," Ginny mused, "I'm filled with a mixture of distain and admiration."

I couldn't help but grin at my redheaded friend. "How about we put our dress robes on, hmm?"

"Fine," Ginny sighed. We turned our backs to one another as we took out our dress robes. My green dress robe had been hanging in my closet, and as I took it off its hanger I couldn't help but smile. It really was a rather pretty dress. I slipped it on, straightening out the overcoat. Finally I turned around to find Ginny, who looked gorgeous.

Her dress was an icy blue, with vines embroidered all over so it appeared that they were creeping up on her. It had a V-neckline so that her cleavage (of which she had a lot more than myself) was evident, but the neckline was not plunging. Her sleeves were a slightly lighter colour, and they clung tightly to her arms until they reached her elbows, where the material suddenly flowed down to her wrists. Finally, the dress seemed to be made of a very fine material, possibly silk.

"Where's the over robe?" I asked her, noticing that she was simply wearing the dress.

"I didn't like it," she replied as she applied a light cover of blush to her cheeks. "It covered up too much of my figure."

"You're going to freeze," I informed her, thankful that I was sensible enough to get a velvet dress robe. "What with no over robe *and* your dress being made out of silk. That is what it's made out of, isn't it?"

"Yes," Ginny replied. "But I'm not exactly planning on rolling in the snow tonight."

I gave a small laugh. "Well, any case, Neville will just love you."

I saw Ginny fidget for a second, pausing as she twisted her hair into an intricate bun.

“What is it?” I asked her curiously.

“Nothing!” she exclaimed. “Er...yes. I hope he’ll love it.” She gave me a smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes. I stared at her suspiciously, but she had already turned away from me to try to finish up (she was already far behind).

Sighing I pulled the front half of my hair back, twisting it to the side until the two bunches reached one another in a ponytail. The rest of my hair flowed down, bushy as ever. I swept away two stray hairs and decided that I looked decent enough. I turned to Ginny to discover that she wasn’t even halfway down with her make-up.

“Gin, the ball’s starting in ten minutes!” I told her. “See, this is why I don’t waste time with such unnecessary things as make-up.”

“You’re just too lazy to bother with it,” Ginny replied, opening her mouth as she applied mascara. “You go on without me,” she insisted. “I’ll be down in a bit.”

“But how will I find my date?” I inquired.

“Oh, he knows that he’s going out with you,” Ginny said. “He’ll find you, don’t worry.”

“Why is it that he knows I’m his date yet I don’t know I’m his?” I demanded, placing my hands stubbornly on my hips.

Ginny rolled her eyes. “Because it happened to work out that way. Now go!” She gave me a little shove, pushing me out of the room.

“Hey!” I exclaimed. “This is my— ” Ginny shut the door in my face. “Room,” I finished quietly. “Oh well...”

I walked down the stairs to the common room I shared with Harry, careful not to trip on the hem of my dress. When I reached the bottom step, I heard a voice exclaim incredulously, “*Hermione?*”

I looked up to find Harry (who was *still* in his school robes) staring at me. I blushed.

"Hi, Harry," I replied nervously. "Er...are you okay?" Harry hadn't moved since I started talking.

Finally Harry seemed able to regain the ability to speak. "You look...amazing."

My face grew redder. "Oh, stop it," I told him anxiously. "I mean, I'm not even wearing any make-up, and my hair's still a mess, and it's not as if I look good in this dress (not compared to Ginny, anyway) and—"

"You're gorgeous," Harry interrupted me, blushing himself. Together we would out-red every single Weasley.

"Thanks," I said quietly. "Want to come down with me?" I asked, shaking my head slightly towards the other set of stairs. "I mean, we might as well go down together."

"Oh, I need to get my robes on," he told me quickly.

"I can wait," I told him.

Harry suddenly seemed uncomfortable. "I might be a while," he told me, running his fingers nervously through his hair, a clear sign that he was avoiding telling me something. "I have to do something after. You...you go on without me, okay?"

"Okay..." I agreed, eyeing him suspiciously. Honestly, how was it possible that Ron, Ginny, *and* Harry were all acting weird on one night? It must've been because of the ball...

I reached the Great Hall a few minutes later. I couldn't help but stand in the door way as I stared. It was breathtaking. There were ice sculptures of the founders in every corner of the room, and a mini replica of the original Hogwarts in the centre. Despite being frozen, it was also, apparently, a waterfall, as water spurted from the four towers. Looking up at the ceiling, which was enchanted to reflect the weather outside, I saw snow falling. It melted halfway down its

journey. From the front of the room a band was playing a gorgeous minuet that sounded very similar to Bach's Minuet in G.

"Would you care to move?" a voice sneered. "Some of us have better things to do than stare at your backside, mudblood."

I rolled my eyes, recognizing the voice immediately.

"Aren't we impatient tonight, Malfoy," I told him, turning around to find him on the arms of Pansy Parkinson who was wearing the horrible pink frock that Ginny had shown me in that magazine of hers. "Oh look," I said in mock surprise. "Malfoy and Parkinson. Don't you ever get sick of each other's big heads?"

"You're one to talk," Malfoy shot back. "Looks like you're too ugly to get a date. I guess not even Potter wanted to be seen with a mudblood."

I glared at Malfoy and he knew he had hit a sore spot. "Have a nice night, Granger," he sniggered as he pushed past me.

Deciding that maybe standing in the middle of the doorway wasn't such a grand idea, I walked over to a set of chairs off to the side for the losers like me who were dateless. Sadly, I was the only one there.

Twenty minutes later I was still sitting in my chair despondently, thoroughly depressed that my date had yet to show up. Why wasn't he here? Ginny *had* said that she had set me up. She wouldn't lie to me, right?

Oh Merlin, how I prayed that it was Harry. I honestly didn't see how it couldn't be him after all of Ginny's nosing and pushing and being annoying. Plus, after thinking about today's events, what other explanation would there be for Ginny and Harry's oddities?

Further more, I wanted it to be Harry. I had been a git, letting my fear of being turned away stop me from asking him sooner. Now someone else asked him. Or so he claimed.

Oh Merlin, let my date be him, I begged silently to myself, playing with the hem of my sleeve. *Please let him have said no because he was already going with me and didn't wish to ruin the surprise.*

A few minutes later someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around eagerly, only to find Ron.

"Oh, it's you," I replied glumly, placing my chin into my hands.

"Thanks so much," Ron replied lightly. "Is that any way to treat your date?"

I coughed and then sputtered, "My...my what?"

"Date, Hermione," Ron smiled. "Ginny set you up with me."

"No!" I cried out. At Ron's hurt expression I quickly said, "I just thought you were going to be Harry."

"You're upset because you thought I was going to be Harry?" Ron asked with an amused grin.

"No," I replied immediately, not wanting Ron to think that something so trivial (all right, so it was anything *but* trivial) was bothering me.

"Right," Ron said, still grinning in that annoying way.

"Oh, shut up," I said, giving him a look that clearly said, "Not now." I looked around the hall, trying to find Harry. I finally turned to Ron and demanded, "Who is he with?"

"Harry?"

"Of course *Harry*!" I cried out desperately.

"Oh, he's with Ginny," Ron replied, a slight glimmer in his eyes. "She asked him and he said yes."

"Ginny?" I replied, staring at him in disbelief. "*Ginny* asked him here?"

"Yes," Ron replied. "Is that a problem? I told her it was a good idea and that you wouldn't mind, what with your inability to ask him."

"I did ask him!" I protested.

"Well Ginny got to him first," Ron retorted. "After you hadn't asked him for nearly two weeks, I assumed that you didn't want to go with him, seeing as something like this could never daunt the likes of you. And after all, it isn't as if you don't trust Ginny." He was testing me. I knew it. Ron wanted me to go insane and jump Harry. Damn Weasleys.

I stared at Ron, and before I could stop myself I seethed, "Go to Hell." My eyes grew wide as I realized what I had said and I covered my mouth to prevent myself from sputtering something else stupid and un...me-like.

"*Excuse me?*" Ron exclaimed, completely surprised. "Did you just curse at me?"

"No," I said quickly. *So much for not overreacting to things that are trivial*, I thought sadly to myself. But I still had time to make a beautiful save that would make my inner voice incredibly proud.

"No?" Ron questioned.

"No," I reiterated firmly.

"Then what *did* you say?"

I fought to find something that sounded realistically alike. "I said...er...that is..." I paused for a few more seconds while Ron tapped his foot expectantly. "I want a well!" I cried out. *Pathetic*, my inner voice said in dismay. *You're too cocky*, I retorted.

"You said, 'I want a well'?" Ron asked doubtfully, raising an eyebrow at me.

"I did," I replied with a stubborn nod.

"Why on *earth* do you want a well?" he demanded of me.

"To drink of course!" I exclaimed quickly. "I'm, er, completely parched. What type of a date are you?"

"I'm your date, *not* your slave, Hermione dearest," Ron said in a mockingly sweet voice.

"I thought that's what a date was," I replied, smiling in a sickeningly sweet fashion.

Ron shook his head in disbelief and went off to find me a well. Or a punch bowl. Whichever he found first. My money was on the punch bowl.

A few moments later Ron returned to me with a cup full of punch. I took the cup just out of necessity to prove that I was not lying. Taking a big sip, I looked around the room for Harry and realized that this was a mistake when I spit out the punch. Poor Ron was drenched.

"Thanks, Hermione," he said with a roll of his eyes. "I know you didn't exactly want to go with me, but was this nece-ah..." He followed my eyes and found Harry and Ginny, walking in together.

"I can't believe it's true," I said in a hurt voice. "How could she do this to me?"

Ron chose not to answer, preoccupying himself with scrounging his blue dress robes. I ignored the fact that he didn't answer as I stared at Harry. He looked...amazing. Like myself, he was wearing dark green dress robes, except he chose his to match his eyes (I assume), while mine were chosen to match my complexion. His raven hair was still as wild as ever, but that didn't prevent him from being one of the most handsome men in the room. And he was on the arms of my so-called female best friend.

I felt my heart race as Harry and Ginny began dancing to a waltz that was playing. Her right hand was on his waist while his left hand was on her back, with Ginny's other hand lightly in Harry's. They weren't up against one another, but it was close enough to make me feel sick. Ginny had betrayed me. She had tricked me into thinking that she was helping me so that she could get Harry. And Neville...poor, *poor* Neville! How would he feel when he found out?

"This doesn't make any sense," I whispered to myself. "They looked so happy a few days ago..." It was then that I made up my mind.

Leaving a bewildered Ron behind, I marched up to the dancing couple. I patted Ginny on the shoulder impatiently.

Turning around, Ginny smiled at me. “Hi, Hermione! How are you toni— ”

Before she could finish a loud *smack* emanated around the Hall. Everyone quickly grew quiet as they watched the scene. Ginny held her red face, glaring slightly at me, as I stared at the hand that had only done such a heinous act once before, and that was with Malfoy.

“What the bloody Hell was that for?” Ginny demanded angrily, letting go of Harry who was staring at the two of us in slight fear.

“As if you don’t know,” I seethed, tears threatening to roll down my face. “How *could* you?” I asked her. “How could you do this to me? To *Neville*? I thought you said you liked Neville, yet all of this time you were just...just...just *using* me to get to Harry!” Ginny tried to explain but before she could I interrupted her. “You *tricked* me!” I exclaimed. “You knew that I’d fallen for Harry! Do my feelings mean nothing to you?” I waited for Ginny to answer, and suddenly my eyes grew wide as I realized in horror what I had just said. “You knew that I’d fallen for Harry!” seemed to play a million times in my head.

“Oh no,” I moaned, burying my face into my hands. “No, no, no, no, no.”

“I think we should go talk outside, away from all of this,” Harry’s voice told me calmly. He pried my hands away from my face so he could look at me. “Hermione,” he said gently. I closed my eyes, absolutely mortified, but allowed Harry to lead me out of the Great Hall as everyone began to whisper about what had occurred moments ago.

Chapter 18

I followed Harry, playing nervously with the hem of my sleeve. I felt a gust of wind as we finally walked onto the snow-covered grounds, and it occurred to me that I was planning on taking a walk in the middle of November in a dress robe.

However, all of this flew out of my mind as I tripped over a branch that I hadn't noticed and fell down. Due to my close proximity to him, Harry toppled down with me, landing strategically on top of me.

My first instinct was to complain about the pain in my back due to the fact that I had landed on what I could only presume was a rock, but suddenly I realized the whole situation and began to laugh. Harry, who was still on top of me, began laughing as well, as the snow fell on top of us.

After our laughter subsided Harry stared at me. He pushed hair that had escaped from my bun out of my eyes and then brushed snow off my face. His fingers landed on my nose, and I couldn't help but smile as I felt a warm glow fill my body. Slowly his hand moved to my cheek and before I knew what was happening he was kissing me.

Harry James Potter was kissing *me*, Hermione Jane Granger.

The romantic part of my brain melted as his other hand wrapped itself around my back (rather a hard feat considering I was pushed up against the ground), but before I could let my own hands reach for his hair my logical side kicked in.

He can't possibly feel this way about you.

I quickly pushed Harry away, gasping for breath. Harry stared at me.

"What's wrong?" he asked, clearly wondering if he had gone too far and if our friendship was ruined.

"It's...it's nothing!" I exclaimed, jumping up and brushing off my robes. "I just...I need to go inside and...and get a drink. Or something." I

turned around and began head inside, leaving a very disappointed Harry in the snow.

After walking five feet I stopped. What was I doing? Was I really going to walk away from the man of my dreams simply because the logical part of my brain was telling me that someone like Harry could never like me?

You've known him for seven years, my heart reminded me. You two know everything there is to know about one another. Isn't it just possible that maybe, just maybe, he's fallen for you as much as you have for him?

Come off it! my brain laughed at me. Why would the Harry Potter fall in love with a bushy-haired bookworm who rants about house elves?

Because he's not shallow. Who are you going to believe Hermione? Your heart, or the thing that turned you into a walking textbook? my heart demanded of me.

I might have turned you into a walking textbook, but when have I ever let you down? the logical voice asked me.

"About two minutes ago," I hissed to myself, and it was then that I came to my decision.

Don't you dare do this! my brain instructed me.

"Oh sod off!" I cried out, and before anyone, most particularly the voice inside my head could stop me, I turned back around and launched myself on Harry, forcing him down on to the ground.

"Hermione!" he exclaimed as my hands finally reached his hair. "What are you doing?"

"What I should have done two months ago!" I told him. Before I could return to what I hoped would become a snogging session, Harry interjected, "So...so you *do* feel the same way?"

"Of course I do!" I cried out. "Why else have I been writing insane diary entries in an attempt to keep myself from, as Ginny so eloquently put it, jumping you? I love you!"

Harry's face fell. "Oh, I thought we could just be friends with benefits."

I felt my face heat up at what he said. "You *what*?" I cried, frozen in place on top of him.

"Just kidding," Harry replied, as his face broke out into a grin. "I love you, too."

Had this been a normal conversation I would have lightly hit Harry for tricking me, but this most definitely wasn't your run-of-the-mill situation. Instead I squealed as I bent down again, only to be stopped by Harry's hand.

"What is it this time?" I growled, beginning to get upset that I wasn't getting to kiss him after all of these months.

"Don't you want to talk about this first?" he asked me, always the gentleman.

"If I wanted to talk, do you honestly think that I would have thrown myself on top of you, outside, in the middle of November, while it was *snowing*, in a *dress*?"

"Good point," Harry replied, and he quickly placed his hand behind my head as we finally finished what we had started.

Several hours later (okay, fifteen minutes later), our snogging session was interrupted by none other than Ron and Ginny, who made themselves present by loudly cheering. The sound of them had startled me, causing me to roll off Harry and land back first in the snow. My back was drenched once again (not to mention cold) in minutes.

"What the Hell do you think you're doing?" I demanded of them crossly. Honestly, if I could shoot fire out of my eyes...well, not only would they be burnt to a crisp but I also doubt that there would be

much snow left. I probably would have been considerably warmer, too.

“Cheering you and congratulating ourselves for our triumph,” Ron grinned, high-fiving his sister.

“Your triumph?” I guffawed. “Excuse me, but Harry and I got together on our own accord. Notice that no one was out here when we— ”

“Jumped each other like sex-deprived rabbits?” Ginny smirked.

“I was going to opt for something more elegant,” I replied, deeply troubled by my friend’s highly perverted mind, “but yes. That gets the point across.”

“And let’s see, why exactly did you come out here?” Ginny asked, putting on a mock curious look.

“We came out here to talk about my reaction to you coming with Harry,” I informed her.

“So basically, had Harry not come with me, you never would’ve had that wonderful little outburst of yours, and you wouldn’t have needed to have your so-called conversation,” Ginny smirked once again. “So therefore, you have me to thank.”

“I helped too!” Ron protested. Ginny raised an eyebrow at him. “Well, a bit.”

“Fine, so technically you did get us together,” I admitted reluctantly.

“Actually,” Harry interrupted, “I helped get us together, too.”

I swivelled around on the spot. “What?”

“Well, I mean, I knew that you liked me,” Harry explained. “So I worked together with Ron and Ginny to get this to happen.”

“What do you mean you knew?” I demanded.

“Remember that other day when you came back from shopping and you saw me talking to Ginny?” Harry asked.

“Yes...” I replied uncertainly, not really sure where this was leading.

“Well, she told me how you felt about me, and I told her that I felt the same way.”

“Let me get this straight,” I exclaimed in disbelief, holding up a hand. “You knew that I had feelings for you, which you returned, and you asked Ginny to this bloody ball?” I was trying to hold in my anger as best as I could, but considering the torture I had put myself under because Harry had rejected me for the ball...

“Well, Ginny told me that if I asked you that you would say no,” Harry shrugged, “so we cooked up this plan. I would go with her and Ron would be the guy Ginny set you up with so that neither of us could really get taken by someone else.”

I turned around to face Ginny and stalked towards her. “You told Harry that if he were to ask me to the ball I would say no?” I questioned her. Ginny nodded yes. “After I told you to get him to ask me?” Another thought dawned on me. “I asked you to the ball and you still said no! What was that all about?” I demanded of Harry.

“Well, Ginny said that you would think I’d only say yes because I wanted to go as a friend. She said that if you were to ask I was to say no.”

I turned on Ginny, glaring at her.

“Calm down,” Ginny barked. “It was the only way that we could both get what we wanted.”

“Get what we wanted?” I exclaimed. “What on earth are you talking about?”

“Yeah, what are you talking about?” Harry joined in, clearly annoyed after witnessing this change of events.

The-boy-who-lived and the smartest girl at Hogwarts would have intimidated anyone else, but trust Ginny to be that exception.

“Well it’s simple,” Ginny explained. “I obviously wanted to get you with Harry. At first it was a game – how quickly could I get Hermione with Harry? But then you said that if I got you two together and you ever had kids that you’d name your first daughter after me.”

“You what?” Harry whispered urgently into my ear.

“Hush,” I instructed him, listening intently to Ginny’s story.

“Suddenly the game became a mission,” Ginny told us, her eyes lighting up, “except now it was slightly more complicated. I needed to get two of you together, but do so in a way that would obviously be thanks to me. So I came up with this whole plan and now here we are.”

My jaw dropped in surprise and I stared at her, unable to muster a sound.

“What about Neville?” I finally sputtered. “I mean, how’d he feel when he found out that you weren’t going with him?”

“I told him the whole plan, and he agreed to it,” Ginny shrugged. “He ended up getting sick anyway. He’s in his dormitory right now, sleeping.”

“You mean four of you were in on this, yet I knew absolutely nothing?” I asked, slightly enraged.

“Actually,” piped up Ron, “five of us.”

“Five? Who was the fifth one?” I demanded.

“Luna!” Ron exclaimed.

“But her aunt— ”

“Oh, she did die,” Ron reassured me, “but she said it was all right if I went with you so that you and Harry could get together.”

I stood there again, unable to word how angry, yet how grateful, I was at all of them.

“How about we go inside and have that talk now?” Harry asked me with a smile. “In our common room...I bet the fire will make it wonderfully cosy.”

I sighed and deciding that yelling at my friends wasn't worth my time. After all, I was with Harry now wasn't I? And, technically, their efforts had gotten us together. Sure, in a very run-of-the-mill sort of way, but they were successful.

“All right,” I smiled at him. “But can we get some hot chocolate from the Hall first? I'm freezing...not to mentioned soaked.”

Harry grinned. “Of course.”

And together we headed back inside to the sounds of Ginny yelling after us happily, “Oh, and I decided that you should just name her Ginny! There's no need to torture her with Ginevra as well.”

Harry and I exchanged looks.

“We'll deal with that later,” I reassured him.

“Wait, so we *will* deal with it?” he asked me.

My eyes grew wide as I stopped in my tracks. “Well, er, what I meant to say was...” Flabbergasted I told him, “We'll talk about this when we have our talk.”

Harry grinned at me as we walked to our common room to have our talk, and maybe even do a little more.

&

November 22,

So everything worked out fine. Wonderfully in fact. Sure, Ginny was a complete prat to put me through all of this, but you know what? It was absolutely worth it. The insanity, the worrying, the realizing, the denial, the waiting... I would redo all of it just to be where I am now.

Harry and I did end up having that long talk in our common room. It was rather romantic, what with the snow falling gently outside the window, a waltz from downstairs floating through our room, and the fire blazing. We decided that we'd go through with it, that we'd be a couple. We both agreed that it was about time. Then, of course, we had to talk about the whole Ginny thing...

Well, I'll put it this way, there's a possibility it might happen. No, he didn't propose. That'd be preposterous considering we just started going out, but we agreed that, seeing how long we'd known each other, there was a definite chance that we'd end up together...many years from now mind you.

Harry adamantly said no to the idea of naming our first girl Ginny. I told him he better hope that, assuming we married, we'd have all boys, because otherwise Ginny would find one way or another to make it so.

Afterwards we simply sat on the couch, my head on Harry's shoulder and his arm around my waist, holding me close to him. It was so comfortable and it felt so right. I thought we were going to end up sleeping on the couch, but a few hours later Ron and Ginny burst in on us. We ended up playing a long game of Chess, with Ron and Ginny versus Harry and myself.

Needless to say, Harry and I lost.

Which just goes to prove that nothing's changed. That's why, if you're going to choose one man to fall in love with, you should always choose your best friend – because everything will stay exactly the same. Harry and I are still horrible at Wizard's Chess, Ron's still an idiot when it comes to girls (although Luna's slowly fixing that little problem), Harry and Ron still hate studying (Harry finally put the books away after admitting that he had only studied to get my attention, which I think was rather sweet), and I'm still trying to study for NEWTs amidst all the craziness.

Which reminds me: my list! Which I've added to since I last wrote it in here...

Free the house-elves

Convince Neville that the heliopaths Luna told him about in fifth year do not exist, and that it is indeed safe to go in for a career at the ministry if he chooses to

Convince Ginny, Lavender, and Parvati that I do not need a boyfriend

While I'm at it, convince the three mentioned above that I am not neurotic

Convince Harry that sneaking into my room and creeping into my bathroom while I'm in the shower is not a good idea of a joke, is an abuse of his power as Head Boy and having a room next to mine, and an absolutely perverted thing for him to do, especially as my best friend

Break Ron's heart without actually breaking it

Somehow break up with Terry

Stop Ginny from nagging me

Get together with Harry

I think that's rather impressive, don't you? Five out of nine...and it's only November! I'll definitely continue my work on S.P.E.W. (and now that Harry and I are dating, maybe I can guilt him into helping me...). I'll work on the heliopaths thing...but now that Luna is going to hang out more closely with us that might prove a little difficult. Ginny will never stop nagging me, and I might as well just accept it.

Considering that I now have a boyfriend I doubt I need to convince the giggly girls club that I don't need one, and I no longer need to worry about Harry sneaking into my bathroom. Apparently, earlier this year, he wasn't sure how to act around me, and asked for advice from, of all the guys, Seamus, who instructed Harry on how to "properly" flirt with me. Of course, this was Seamus, who knows absolutely nothing about relationships, which led Harry to ask slightly insane (slightly being the understatement of the century). Anyway, I expect that a few years (possibly even months) from now, I won't mind him bursting in on me mid shower...but that's not for a while. In terms of number nine...I'll assume that I definitely accomplished that.

Number four...that may just be the hardest. For some reason, no one will accept that I'm not neurotic. I don't understand why they insist upon it. Oh well. But I'm telling you, until my dying day I will swear that I'm not neurotic, because really, I'm not.

Merlin! I just looked at the time and realized how much time I've wasted. I should really get working on that essay for Professor Sprout...it's due in a week, and I only have two feet of parchment done!

I just noticed that there's only one last page left in this diary. Amazing how much a girl can write in two months. Harry offered to charm more pages on, but I think I'll just wait for Christmas, so that Harry can buy me a new diary. It'll be like a nice little collection.

Well, I must get to work on that essay. Until the next diary...

Hermione Jane Granger

November 22, 1997

Year Seven at Hogwarts, School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Age 17

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A/N: PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THERE IS ONE MORE CHAPTER...AN EPILOGUE. AGAIN, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STORY WHATSOEVER, FEEL FREE TO ASK IN YOUR REVIEWS. I WILL POST THE ANSWERS AT THE END OF THE EPILOGUE.

HermioneCrookshanks919/HermioneCrookshanks

Epilogue

I finished recounting my memories of the first few months of seventh year. Sighing wistfully, I leaned into the armchair, clutching the diary to my chest.

“Wasn’t that romantic?” I breathed happily.

Hailey stared at me, revulsion on her face. This expression was accompanied by an “I can’t believe you” look in her deep, green eyes that she had luckily inherited from her father, which were also adorned by long, doll-like eyelashes. Unfortunately she had inherited my hair (thank Merlin she didn’t get my teeth), but she was less resistant to hair products than I had been (and still am, for that matter), and often used Sleezeaky’s Hair Potion to tone it done to a light frizz.

“You were so unbelievably thick, it isn’t even funny,” she finally spat out. “Honestly.”

I turned to look at my very blunt daughter (she often reminded me of Ginny – well, at least concerning this certain trait). “What are you talking about?”

“You had to have been blind not to have realized in the beginning that dad was hitting on you!” she exclaimed. “Ew. Oh God. Hitting on you. Great. Just great. I hate you.”

“Hailey Jessica Potter!” I exclaimed.

“I’m sorry,” she apologized. “But how would you feel if you had to waste four, yes, *four* hours hearing your mother drone on and on about how she met your father, how her father hit on her and saw her naked in a shower, how another guy felt her up...oh Merlin.” Hailey shivered. “Honestly. It’s scarring.” I was incredibly surprised by her ability to talk about this. At her age such a thing would’ve made me horribly embarrassed.

"You were the one who asked for some advice," I responded defensively, realizing that I was defending myself to my daughter because I had told her about my life *prior* to her existence.

"No I didn't," Hailey retorted. "I came in here asking for a copy of *Hogwarts, a History* to pack for Hogwarts tomorrow, and you began questioning my relationship with Eric." I noticed Hailey blushing slightly as she said his name, but I was fairly certain that she herself had no idea that she was doing so. "I told you that we were just friends, and then you, you being the most annoying mother in the world, no offence," she added quickly at the warning glare I gave her, "you had to drag me to the study and have us go searching through boxes of your old things, only to find this god forsaken diary and read your entries to me, recounting three pointless months! I *know* you two got together. How else would I be here?"

I stared at my daughter in disbelief. The nerve of her! I never had that much cheek when I was her age, at least not towards my parents. The only words I could muster were, "Book's in the library. Third bookcase, fifth shelf."

Hailey sighed, looking at me with pure exasperation. "And why you couldn't have told me this four hours ago?" She stood up and wiped the dust off of her jeans. After one more glance at me she shook her head and left me alone in the study. Moments later Harry joined me.

"What were you doing up here?" he asked, looking around in confusion.

"Just reading this to our *dear*, dear daughter," I explained, showing the diary to Harry.

Harry took it from me and began flipping through the pages. A smile played onto his lips until he finally burst out in laughter.

"What?" I demanded immediately. "What's so funny?"

"While I'm at it," he read from the diary, "'convince the three mentioned above that I am not neurotic.'"

"What's so funny about that?" I asked him.

"You *are* neurotic," he told me. "That's what's so funny. You couldn't have disproved them if you tried."

"I could too!" I insisted, rather insulted.

"No you couldn't," came Hailey's voice as she passed by the room, carrying *Hogwarts, A History* in her arms.

I shook my head and sighed. "This is dead depressing."

"What is?"

"Even my fourteen-year-old daughter thinks I'm neurotic!" I exclaimed. "But I'm *telling* you, I'm not."

"I happen to *like* people who are neurotic," Harry informed me, smiling. "I guess this means I'm going to have to cheat on you with someone who is..."

"Okay, so maybe just a bit," I said quickly, grinning at Harry. "Anyway, do you know where Ginny is? I want to make sure she has all of her summer homework done before they leave tomorrow. I still can't believe that only Hailey received my gene for studying."

"I still can't believe you actually named our daughter after Ginny," Harry replied. "It made older Ginny's ego five times as big, and it was big enough already."

I shrugged. "Yes, well, she threatened to *Avada Kedavra* me if I didn't. You know she still claims to this day that she set us up, which I suppose, technically she did. It involved lying of course, but technically it was all her."

Harry shook his head in disbelief. "She was really good at manipulating us, wasn't she?"

I laughed. "Yes, she was. Now, I'm going to go look for Ginny. Our daughter Ginny, that is." I sighed. "Honestly, this does make talking about them rather difficult, doesn't it?" I left Harry to search through my journal (I trusted him enough to let him read it, and anyways, it was over twenty years old), finally finding our 16-year-old daughter in

the family room, laughing her head off as she watching some sort of comedy on the telly.

“Ginny Julia Potter what on *earth* do you think you’re doing?” I demanded, walking into the room.

Ginny muted the television and turned to look at me, her brown eyes showing how horribly peeved she was with me.

“Watching the telly,” she replied. “Obviously.”

“Watch that tone,” I said lightly, walking over to her. Ginny rolled her eyes. “*Ginny*,” I warned.

“Sorry,” she muttered.

“As far as I was concerned, you’re leaving for Hogwarts tomorrow, correct?” I asked Ginny, looking at her expectantly.

“Yes, mum,” she replied dully. “September first. 11 AM. Just like when you went.”

“And I do believe that you have yet to finish all of your assignments,” I added, waiting for her reply.

Ginny moaned. “Mum...come on! It’s the last day of break!”

“Your point being?”

“I’ll do it when I get there,” Ginny half whined.

“Ginny,” I sighed. “We both know that you’re going to dump it on Hailey.”

“But she *enjoys* writing these things!” Ginny protested.

“Ginny,” I repeated, crossing my arms. “Work. *Now*.”

“Fine,” she sighed, turning off the television and dragging her feet upstairs. I couldn’t help but chuckle as I watched her exit the room. My daughters were so different it was amazing. Even when it came to their looks. Ginny had straight hair, unlike Hailey, and also unlike

Hailey her hair wasn't brown, but rather, like her namesake, a bright red, which she must have inherited from her grandmother. While Hailey's facial structure was more similar to my own, Ginny's was more akin to Harry. Where Hailey was short, Ginny was tall.

I shook my head once more and left the room, planning to check up on Ginny to make sure that she was doing as she was told. Passing Hailey's room on the way, I took a peek inside to see that she was writing furiously on a piece of parchment.

"Hailey, what are you doing?" I asked her, opening the door wider and stepping in. While Hailey was a lot like me, especially in terms of school, she was much more feminine than I had ever been (I blame that on the fact that my two best friends were males and my lack of close female friends until I was about fourteen). Her room was painted a light blue, with a huge picture window that looked out onto our backyard and had a simply gorgeous view of the sunset every evening. Dark blue taffeta curtains covered the windows at night, but every morning, after Hailey woke up, she would push the curtains aside and let in the sunlight (except, seeing as we lived in England it was often rather dreary out), almost as if she was in a romantic movie.

Her desk was situated under the window while her several thousand bookcases (I did say she was a lot like myself) were against the wall, perpendicular to the windowpane. Parallel to this was her daybed, which had white sheets scattered with purple flowers, accompanied by a fluffy white duvet and a feather pillow. Lined along the wall, where her bed also was, hung paintings by various impressionists, including original works by Monet and Renoir.

Her room was carpeted blue, and a rug of a lighter shade lay in the middle. The room was always well lit, due to the numerous amounts of lamps adorning it (as Harry and I had both grew up muggle for a lot of our lives, we had opted to live in a muggle house with, much to Mr. Weasley's pleasure whenever he visited, muggle technology).

Hailey looked up at me, her quill stopping mid sentence. "I just wanted to rewrite my History of Magic essay again," she replied anxiously. "I didn't like one of my paragraphs."

“Hailey, this is the fifth time you’ve rewritten it,” I laughed, approaching her to take a peek at what she was writing.

“Yes, well, I wanted to make sure it was perfect.”

I took the parchment from the desk, watching as the paper completely unfurled itself. I stared at it in pride, as it was just like something I would have written at fourteen.

“This has to be seven feet long,” I told her happily. “Wasn’t the requirement only two feet?”

Hailey rolled her eyes slightly and used a shrug that I had used many a times when asked the same question during my Hogwarts years. “There simply wasn’t enough room to make my argument.”

I shook my head and laughed again. “Looks like I’m not the only one who’s neurotic. And if I’m correct, you’ll be helping Eric finish his essay tomorrow night before classes start.”

Hailey sighed, twirling the quill in her fingers as she thought about what I had just said. “You’re probably right. Actually, he’ll probably end up needing my help for most of the year. But what can I do? He’ll be too busy playing Quidditch all the time or getting into some sort of trouble, most likely dragging me along.” She saw my worried look (I knew that it was highly hypocritical of me to do so considering all I had done in my Hogwarts years, but I was a mother and it was my goal to raise my daughters right) and added, “Not too much trouble, mind you. It’s not as if we could get into anymore trouble than you and Dad got into.”

“True,” I agreed with a slight nod of my head. “Just stay away from the Forbidden Forest. The centaurs aren’t the nicest creatures.”

“You’re just saying that because you hate horses,” Hailey said. I glared at her slightly and she sighed once more. “Fine, fine. No Forbidden Forest. But it’s not as if Gryffindor won’t win the house cup. My responses in class usually make up for the points we lose.”

I laughed and then added, “You should tell Eric to read a book.” I set her novella back down while I waited for her to answer.

“He’d *still* fail without me,” Hailey replied, now settling for twisting a curl instead of her quill, “and you know how much I hate it when people fail. And besides, this is *Eric* we’re talking about, not just some guy. I can’t leave him hanging.”

I stifled a laugh at the fact that she hadn’t even comprehended that she had just said, “Not just some guy.” I settled on a smirk and giving her a look that plainly said, “I told you.”

“I know, I know,” she sighed, shaking her head sadly. “I’m just as neurotic as you are.”

“As long as we have that settled,” I told her lightly, patting her on the shoulder. “Though that wasn’t the only thing I was smirking at.”

“Wait, what? What else was there to smirk at?” she asked as I left the room.

“Oh, just the fact that I felt the exact same way with your father when I was your age as you do now with Eric. I expect that you go to all of the Quidditch matches and shout yourself hoarse cheering for him despite the fact that you hate flying, are afraid of heights (and you must admit, those seats are rather high up), and you aren’t particularly fond of sports, and Quidditch is no exception. Am I right?”

Hailey responded slowly, clearly not grasping what I was trying to tell her. “Well, yes, I suppose I do. I mean, I always have, ever since he joined the team in second year, but what does that have to do anything?”

“Oh nothing,” I called casually behind my shoulder, closing the door on my daughter’s loud protests (“What did you mean by giving me that anecdote? What does that have to do with Eric and myself? With you and dad? You can’t walk out on me like this! *Mum!*”). I heard her yell for a few more seconds until she finally gave up and I heard the noise of a scratching quill once more.

I turned and smiled at Harry, who had just joined me on my quest to check up on Ginny.

“What?” he asked, looking at my wide smile.

"Not only is Hailey just as neurotic as I am," I stopped to let Harry laugh, "but she will most likely end up marrying Eric." I giggled, something I rarely did, but the thought of it made me happy enough to, well, giggle.

Harry stared at me. "She insists that they're just friends," he told me finally.

"Exactly," I told Harry. "And what did I say for six years?"

Harry's eyes grew wide as he finally realized what I meant.

"How long do you think she'll be in denial?" he asked me as we continued down the corridor.

"Considering that she's just like me," I told him, "I would say a very long time."

FIN

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A/N: Well it's been a remarkable eight months. I can't believe that I started writing this fanfic in December. It took a long time, and there were many times when my brain completely froze up and I had no idea how I would continue the story (thanks tons to Terese for the amazing ideas when I had those brain freezes), but we finally got here. Hopefully you enjoyed the ride as much as I did.

Now, enough for the corniness. LOL. There seemed to be only one question on everyone's mind: will there be a sequel?

At the moment I have no plans for a sequel. There really isn't anything more I can do with Hermione... After all, what more is there to be neurotic about? LOL. I suppose I could do one around the time when she and Harry are preparing for their wedding... Or maybe even a next generation sequel for Hailey – "I'm Not Neurotic! It Just Runs in the Family..." type thing. LOL.

However, I truly do not have any current plans to write a sequel. However, I will not say that it will never happen, so definitely keep an eye open for one (and for my other fics, too!).

To everyone who's read, thank you so much. And special thanks to everyone who's reviewed.

Thanks for sticking through!

Until the next story,

HermioneCrookshanks919